

University of Alberta

Echoes of Education: Adult Learning in the Coal Branch

by

Erna Elvira Luger



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

Adult and Higher Education

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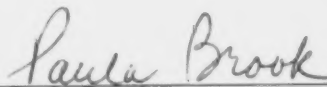
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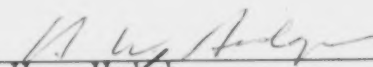
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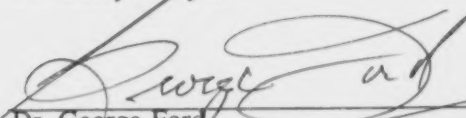
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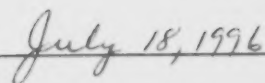
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled ECHOES OF EDUCATION: ADULT LEARNING IN THE COAL BRANCH submitted by Erna Elvira Luger in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education.


Dr. Paula Brook


Dr. Henry Hodysh


Dr. George Ford


July 18, 1996

Dedication

This study is dedicated to the memory of my father, Karl Henry Berendt, who unintentionally contributed to adult learning by taking his European education deep into the coal pits of Alberta and whose love of learning has always been an inspiration to me; and to Mom, who helped me more this year than she knows.

Abstract

The questions motivating this investigation can be summarized as, "What was the nature of adult learning in the remote area of the Alberta Coal Branch"? and "Who and what were the providers of the adult learning activities and opportunities"? The time period covered the life of the Coal Branch from its beginning in 1911 to the closure of its last town in 1958.

A focus group was conducted with 10 former residents of the area. In addition, two personal interviews provided more detailed perspectives. Extensive archival documentation supplemented the oral data. Responses to the questions asked in the interviews were categorized according to a scheme which provided the framework for the presentation of the findings. Analysis of the data was presented in narrative structure.

The findings of this study have documented the wide variety of adult learning activities and opportunities which were available to the people of the Coal Branch and which they developed for themselves. People sought to improve the quality of their lives not only from formal education, but also from libraries, books, and other mass media and from other people. Perhaps the most useful finding of the study is not in the lists of activities and organizations that existed, but in the summary statements that confirm the idea that adult learning is found in whatever activity people choose to enrich their skills, knowledge, understanding, and attitudes about life.

Acknowledgement

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Paula Brook, the supervisor of this study, for her guidance and assistance during the writing of my thesis. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Henry Hodysh and Dr. George Ford for their enthusiasm and encouraging comments in regard to my research.

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Chapter 1 Overview of the Problem

Introduction

Scattered along some 70 km of railroad track in the shadow of the Rockies of west-central Alberta lie the remnants and memories of a dozen coal-mining towns and camps, once home to approximately 12,000 people from 1911 to 1958 (Kroetsch, 1968). Although situated only 300 km west of the capital city of Edmonton, the area existed in isolation, unconnected with the rest of Alberta by road until the 1940s and for many years serviced only by train. The story of these once bustling communities complete with schools, churches, businesses, and orchestras is alive in the hearts and minds of their former residents. It is also hidden in archival documents and articles.

While the communities of the area known as the Coal Branch have disappeared, interesting questions concerning their history remain. Given the isolation of the area, how did people avoid intellectual stagnation? What did people do to improve the quality of their lives? Where and how did they obtain knowledge? What and who were the agents of learning? How did the untamed environment and the perilous occupation of coal mining influence the learning climate of the communities? Questions such as these and "the simple desire to acquire knowledge about previously unexamined phenomena" (Beach, 1969, p. 561) have prompted this study.

Significance of the Study

The study of learning activities of any particular area adds depth to our understanding of the development of the education in the community. This research is significant as a study of the development of the Coal Branch area with special

reference to the learning opportunities of adults. It will help fill an existing gap in knowledge of adult education in Alberta and Canada (Kidd, 1979, p. 11; Selman, 1995, p. 29; Welton, 1987, p. 2).

The study possesses another importance in that it is a story of general interest about this rich and little-known part of Alberta's history. It is estimated that only 5% of Albertans can pinpoint the Coal Branch area (McDonald, 1980, Provincial Archives). This research preserves for the future a source of knowledge on life in the Coal Branch, as some of the information presented here would likely not be recorded and hence be lost to future generations. In the telling of this story, reference will be made to people of the area who may not be alive a few years from now and whose story might otherwise be lost.

I have taken a special interest in the Coal Branch, presenting whatever information I could find about adult learning as it developed there. The vitality of the area has always been a source of fascination and curiosity for me. The Coal Branch is part of my heritage as I was born and grew up there, the daughter of European immigrants who arrived in this country in 1928. The motto of the Coal Branch Club today is, "These are my mountains and I am coming home." This study is a way of coming "home" for me.

Background and History of the Coal Branch

In order to fully understand the nature of adult learning in any given geographical area, it is appropriate to establish as clearly as possible the context of the area. A brief description of the geography, history, demographics, economy, job requirements, and amenities provided in the Coal Branch follows. While such factors do not separately explain what occurred in adult learning, together they provide a picture of the participant, or resident, of the community being studied and have a direct bearing on the type of learning that took place.

Geography

The term Coal Branch refers to a spur of the Canadian National Railway which resembled a branch with its junction near the town of Edson and extending about 120 km southwest to include the mining towns and camps of Mountain Park, Cadomin, Leland, Luscar, Kaydee, Mercoal, Coalspur, Sterco, Foothills, Lovett, Coal Valley, Robb and Bryan. The western arm of the branch contained the towns of Cadomin, Luscar, Mountain Park, and the two smaller camps of Leland and Kaydee. The eastern arm consisted of Coal Valley, Foothills, Lovett, and Sterco. The towns of Bryan, Coalspur, Mercoal, and Robb were situated near head of the branch (see location map, Figure 1).

Coal mining towns are traditionally thought to be grey and grimy communities usually found amidst smoke and the din of heavy industry. Hard-drinking men with blackened faces supposedly walk the streets. The towns of the Alberta Coal Branch do not fit this stereotype. Here, the communities were secluded mountain villages located

in a tranquil wilderness connected to each other and to the outside world only by rail until the 1940s when a road was completed into the area. The town of Cadomin lay wedged between two mountains along the banks of the McLeod River, while Luscar nestled in a beautiful mountain valley amidst Iceland poppies (planted by the residents) and pinewoods. Mountain Park, once the highest inhabited community in Canada at 1890 m (Lake, 1967), was situated near the tree line at the foot of Mount Cheviot. The view from even  in these towns was one of majestic mountain peaks, high ridges, and Alpine meadows in summer. The towns in the eastern part of the branch were set in the gentler regions of forested foothills, while Robb lay hidden away in a deep valley along a winding creek. Today the Coal Branch area can be accessed from Highway 16 by turning south at Edson or alternately, south at Hinton.

History

The laying of the Grand Trunk Railway and the Canadian Northern Railway across the West in 1906 sparked a need for coal exploration to fuel the locomotives. In 1909, a prospector by the name of John Gregg staked the first claim for the coal deposits in Luscar and Mountain Park (Edson-Jasper Signal, October 18, 1928). That same year some private companies began prospecting for coal followed in 1910 by British financial interests who moved quickly to capitalize on the local coal market. The result of this activity was the opening of mines in Lovett in 1911; Mountain Park in 1913; Cadomin in 1917; Mercoal in 1920; and Luscar in 1921 (den Otter, 1967). The railroad was completed in 1913 providing a link to the outside world and remaining a key economic factor in the history of the Coal Branch to this day.

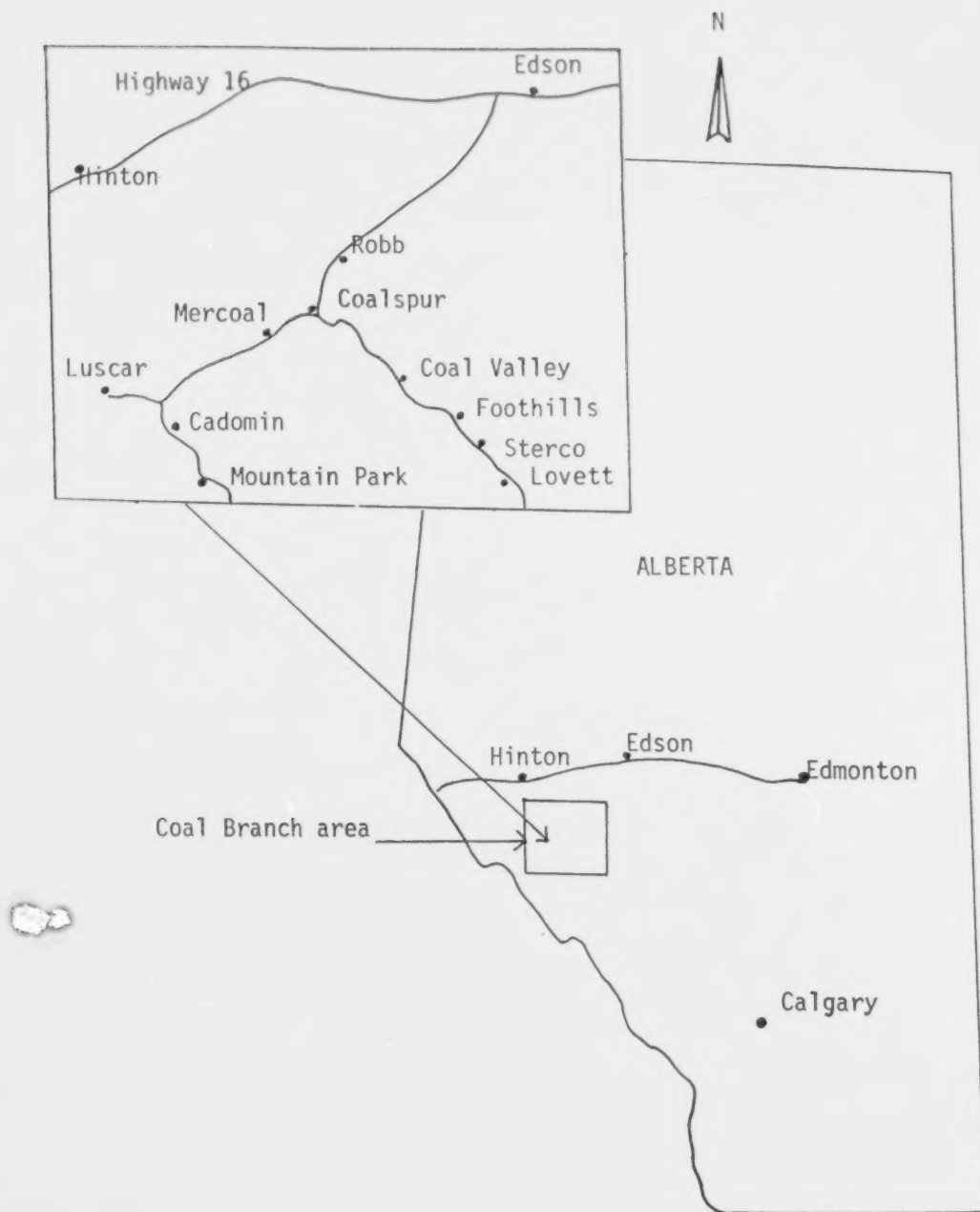


Figure 1: Location map with insert showing Coal Branch area of Alberta.

For a period of 45 years, Coal Branchers lived passionately and peacefully in hubs of social activity until falling coal markets forced the sudden closure of the mines. With World War II over and the switch from coal to diesel-powered locomotives, the need for the product was no longer there. The discovery of oil in Alberta in 1947 dealt the final blow. Mountain Park closed in 1950 (Cardinal Coals Limited, 1996) followed in quick succession by Cadomin in 1952, Luscar in 1956, and Mercoal in 1958 (Ross, 1974). Employees were released and the Coal Branch became a region of ghost towns. Buildings were dismantled, relocated out of the Coal Branch, bulldozed into the ground, or in the case of Luscar, burned to the ground and used as a backdrop for the movie Naked Flame.

Demographics

As well as the setting, demographics impact the way learning occurs in any given area. In 1916, five years after the first mine opened, the population of the Coal Branch totalled 315 (Statistics Canada: Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1916). In the next five years the population had increased to 1,527 and continued to increase to 2,758 by 1926 (Statistics Canada: 1930). The largest centre, Cadomin, reached a population of 2,000 at its peak in the 1930s, while Mountain Park was slightly smaller at 1,000 souls. Luscar and Mercoal each approached 1,000 residents as well. In total, close to 12,000 people called the Coal Branch home between 1911 and 1958 (Kroetsch, 1968).

A variety of ethnic groups from developed societies and big cities joined the towns. Most were part of the wave of European immigrants to Canada in the early part

of the century. In 1918, twenty different nationalities were employed by the Luscar Coal Company (Maydonik, 1985) and all groups were usually represented in each community. Their backgrounds included Austrian, Czechoslovakian, Croat, English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Rumanian, Scottish, Serbian, Swedish, Polish, Ukrainian, and Welsh. The Canadian settlers were mostly from Nova Scotia. It is difficult to determine which ethnic groups were predominant and as time went by the numbers would change. Mine management personnel tended to be British since most of the larger mining companies were British-owned. In spite of the cosmopolitan population, racial and class conflict were not problems. People from a variety of backgrounds and cultures worked together to build strong, peaceful communities. There were minor incidents, to be sure, but overall the Coal Branch remained a tightly-knit community.

Job Requirements

The mines required highly-skilled and experienced people which meant that some degree of previous training or formal education was not uncommon, particularly among management, who tended to be progressive and interested in keeping employees happy. There was little room for inexperienced workers although during labor shortages, some were hired and trained in the mines, as were boys growing up in the communities (Valla, taped interview, 1967). Many of the miners who came to the Coal Branch had previous mining experience in the collieries of the Crowsnest Pass,



Brule, and Pocahontas. Den Otter (1967) reported that

... in 1927 the Alberta Government required a certificate of proficiency for all miners working on the coal face. The prerequisite for the certificate required not only one year of supervised experience at the face but also a working knowledge of the English language. (p. 46)

In some of the camps on the Eastern branch where an inferior coal was mined for domestic purposes, work was seasonal and men would leave for the summer to farm on the prairies (Hammett, 1967, taped interview). In each townsite, however, there remained a large core of permanent settlers who had brought their families with them and who intended to stay a lifetime. These men were not the typical wild-living drifters of the gold-mining camps seeking a quick fortune. This factor was crucial in the development of the social and intellectual structure of the communities of the Coal Branch. The 1914-15 Mountain Park Director's Report acknowledged that "the venture is rooted in a busy and secure community."

Economy

The economy of the Coal Branch was based on the mining of a high grade sub-bituminous coal. Coal was the reason for the very existence of the Coal Branch and for many years, local and foreign markets such as Japan kept the economy strong. Small lumber mills sprang up as well to supply the need for wood products--lumber, railway ties, and mine props (MacDonald, 1980, Provincial Archives). Some of the smaller mines owned by smaller companies closed or slowed down from time to time, but for the most part there was work to be found in the mines, the lumber mills, or with the railways. Even during the depression the economy of the Coal Branch

remained fairly stable in most of the towns, peaking in 1929 and again during World War II.

Amenities

Although the coal companies virtually controlled the lives of the workers in these closed communities of the Coal Branch, labor relations were good overall and the company provided many first-rate amenities which included community halls and libraries. Indeed, while most of rural Alberta were still lighting coal-oil lamps and skating on outdoor ponds, the citizens of the Coal Branch enjoyed the luxury of electricity and large covered arenas. Upon leaving a shift and before going home, the miners had to pass through the wash house where they showered and changed clothes, emerging clean and well-dressed.

Recent History

In 1970 Luscar came to life again as a giant stripping venture. The original townsite is the site of a coal cleaning plant and of massive open pits soon to be reclaimed to a "productive and useful condition" (Cardinal River Coals Limited, 1996). A similar strip-mining operation venture has been proposed for the old Mountain Park townsite. A few summer homes remain in Cadomin where the Inland Cement Company of Edmonton operates a limestone quarry, and there are several cottages aining in Mercoal. Coal Valley is a strip-mining operation, while Robb remains a small hamlet with a post office, hotel, and mostly retired people. There is very little evidence today that a thriving society existed in the Coal Branch, and the many tourists who fish, camp, and hike in the area are entirely unaware of its story. But the

toot of the mine whistle, the yoohoo of the berry-pickers, and the wild cheers of the baseball crowds still echo through the hills.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine, through archival documentation and interviewing of former residents, the various formal and nonformal adult learning activities and opportunities that took place in the isolated mining towns of the Alberta Coal Branch. The central questions to be answered were:

1. What was the nature of the adult learning in the Coal Branch?
2. Who and what provided opportunities for adult learning?

To survive and develop as new communities in the early 1900s, the citizens of the Coal Branch needed to fashion an appropriate cultural, intellectual, recreational and moral backdrop for the everyday business of earning a living. Learning opportunities in the context presented earlier is what constitutes the content and purpose of this study. Adult education in this study was approached from a broad rather than a restricted perspective and was referred to as synonymous with adult learning. Of the numerous possible definitions of adult education or learning, Houle's (1972) definition as outlined in the next chapter formed the foundation for this investigation. Activities were included on the basis of their contribution to the betterment of the quality of life; and although many could be labelled other than learning, in this study **any activity which directly or indirectly contributed to adult learning was considered**. Cyril Houle (1972) in his definition of misapplied systems in The Design of Education reflected that adults may well be learning without the benefit of an educator's plan or

even without conscious realization on the learner's part:

In many situations, adult education is accepted as being subordinate or identical to some related function, and a way of work which is appropriate to it is accepted as being the fundamental system to be used to guide learning or teaching. (p. 25)

Because this study examines the broader context of adult learning over approximately 50 years in a dozen communities, some things were bound to be omitted. Not every year was covered, nor was every community. Much is known about Mountain Park because of the prolific writings of some of its early residents, and of Cadomin since it was the largest centre in the Coal Branch. During the early time period of the area in question, the term adult education was not in use, and even in the latter period, formal adult education was only in its beginning stages in Alberta, particularly in rural areas. In a 1975 Encyclopedia Canadiana entry Roby Kidd noted that adult education activities in Canada are usually dated from the time of the first national survey that was completed in 1934 (p. 51). In reality, however, a great deal of adult learning was occurring in other forms and in earlier times.

Thesis Organization

The Table of Contents indicates the organization I took in this study. In this first chapter, I introduced the study and provided the background and socio-economic context of the Coal Branch area of Alberta. I also discussed the purpose and the significance of the study. In the second chapter, I present a discussion of related literature dealing with a broad range of adult education and learning. I also present a brief review of the history of adult education in Canada. The third chapter contains the research design and methodology I used. I identify and describe the sources of data,

research sites, procedures, analyses of data, and the handling of findings. In Chapter four I introduce a typology which allowed learning opportunities and providers to be organized and which provided structure for subsequent presentation of the findings and analysis of my research in that chapter. Also in Chapter four I present the findings from the focus group and individual interviews. Because of the large amount of data, Chapter five continues the presentation of the findings and the analysis of my research. In Chapter six, I provide a summary of the research as well as some reflections, recommendations for further study, and conclusions. The appendices comprise the last section.

Chapter 2 Review of the Related Literature

Introduction

In this chapter, I present a brief review of the history of adult education in Canada. I then review the definitions of adult education and adult learning and deal with the definitions, terms, and concepts used to understand adult learning opportunities as they occurred in the Coal Branch. Frameworks for organization of adult learning activities are also reviewed. I conclude the chapter with a brief summary. A definition of adult learning was necessary for the purpose of identifying the learning activities in the region under investigation. The literature dealing with adult education is rich with definitions which have varied from writer to writer. Because of this variety of perspectives on adult education, I selected for review those resources which focused mainly on the informal learning in social settings, the primary sources of adult education and adult learning in the Coal Branch.

History of Adult Education in Canada

It is useful to place the development of adult learning activities in the Coal Branch in the context of what was happening in the rest of Alberta and Canada. The history of adult education in Canada and Alberta is not yet well documented (Welton (1987) in spite of outstanding contributions made by Canadians to the field. Only the highlights are mentioned in this brief review, the first being the Montreal Mechanics' Institute established in 1828 to instruct mechanics and other skilled workers.

As population increased with the influx of immigrants and settlement pushed west at the turn of the century, another of Canada's unique experiments in adult

education was initiated--the Frontier College founded by Alfred Fitzpatrick. By 1918 more than 3700 camps existed in Canada (Welton, 1987), one of them operative in mining camps north and west of the Coal Branch area.

One of the earliest organized adult learning activities with a primarily educational focus in Canada and also in the Coal Branch was the Women's Institute, established in Ontario in 1897 (Bosetti, 1983). Its programs of lectures and demonstrations combined with opportunities for women to meet together attracted thousands of women who educated themselves and worked "For Home and Country."

In the early part of the century, adult education was not a concern of the government and was available mainly through voluntary or private means such as churches and unions. Very clearly, however, the beginnings of an adult education movement were being established and gradually the value of the different programs was becoming obvious to public authorities.

Government began to play an increasing role, providing correspondence, extension, and agricultural and vocational training. In Alberta, 1912 saw the beginning of the University of Alberta Department of Extension. In 1925, Alberta radio station CKUA originated out of the University of Alberta and provided numerous educational and informative programs which reached even the most remote parts of the province including the Coal Branch.

In the Maritimes, the innovative Antigonish movement was initiated in 1928 by Moses Coady with its goals of community development and the creation of co-operative and credit union organizations (Selman and Dampier, 1991). Back in

Alberta, The Banff School of Fine Arts was established in 1933. The first adult education survey was undertaken in the following year and the subsequent interest and findings of the survey resulted in the formation of a national body for the field, the Canadian Association of Adult Education (CAAE).

In the 20-year period following (1935-1955) many effective national programs and institutions came into being which impacted adult education. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board, the National Farm Radio Forum (1941) and the Citizen's Forum (1944) were the most well known. The July 13, 1943 minutes of a meeting of the Adult Education Extension Committee in Alberta, found in the Provincial Archives in Edmonton, recorded the attendance of representatives from the Alberta Teachers Association; the Department of Extension of the University of Alberta; the Department of Education, the Alberta Federation of Labour, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire; and Walter Kaasa, the deputy minister of Cultural Affairs. Of great interest to me is the fact that all of these were found in the Coal Branch and therefore the area had direct connections with the work of adult education in Alberta at that time. In all parts of Canada, there was growth in vocational education and activity in other areas such as the arts, recreation, and community centres. Educators such as Canada's Roby Kidd in the 1950s pioneered work in such areas as professional development, training, policy formation, and research in the field of adult education. Citizenship and social and cultural development came to the fore during this time period.

In the 1960s and 70s, the major feature in the history of adult education in

Canada was generous government financial assistance in a variety of areas particularly in vocational training. Massive programs in vocational training, upgrading, and community development were instituted. Community colleges expanded and there was rapid growth of all levels of adult education. Federal grants were available to almost anyone who requested them. During these years, Canada continued its contributions to the field through notable adult educators such as Allen Tough and Gordon Selman.

Adult education initiatives continued into the 1980s until a downturn in the Canadian economy and severe cutbacks in the Alberta budget in the 1990s resulted in changes to the way in which adult education could be administered. The changes are ongoing and the end result is not known at the time of this writing.

Adult Education

The term adult education has been equated with continuing education, lifelong learning, further education, recurrent education, and community development, to name a few. In an article on the nature of adult education Robert L. Lasky (1960) stressed that "In complexity, adult education traverses every degree from the most simple to the most advanced" (p. 3).

Because I focused on the various opportunities and sources of learning available to adults in my research, it seemed wise to be as inclusive in definition as possible. I therefore began with the 1919 Report on adult education which defined it as

...all the deliberate efforts by which men and women attempt to satisfy their thirst for knowledge, to equip themselves for their responsibilities as citizens and members of society or to find opportunities for self-expression. (1980, p. 34)

This view which served as the basis of the practice of adult education for many years made it appropriate to include a variety of activities which might have been excluded by some of the narrower definitions that might be appropriate today.

The historian Bernard Bailyn (1960) broadened the scope even further by demonstrating that adult education embraces all processes and activities operative outside formal schooling, and that historically "there would be little to see if we were looking for formal adult education" (p. 58). Well-known scholar Cyril Houle (1972) also defined adult education in a very broad sense:

...a process by which men and women seek to improve themselves or their society by increasing their skill, knowledge, or sensitivities; or it is any process by which individuals, groups, or institutions try to help men and women improve in these ways. (p.32)

It is Houle's definition that is used as a basis in this study.

The broader view of education is becoming increasingly acceptable especially to scholars who have promoted the concept of lifelong learning, a term often used in place of adult education. Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) suggested that adult education is concerned not with preparing people for life, but rather with helping

people live more successfully. They defined adult education as

...a process whereby persons whose major social roles are characteristic of adult status undertake systematic and sustained learning activities for the purpose of bringing about changes in knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills. (p.9)

The most comprehensive definition of adult education is found in the Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education prepared by UNESCO (1980):

...the entire body of organized educational processes, content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behavior in the twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic, and cultural development.... (1980, p. 3)

This lengthy definition demonstrates the extensive and inclusive nature of a wide variety of opportunities in which people do and can engage in to improve themselves and their communities, and the impossibility of a clear definition of adult education.

Adult Learning

Who is an adult? Verner (1963) identified an adult as "a person who has come into that stage of life in which he has assumed responsibility for himself at least and usually for others and who has concomitantly accepted a functional role in his community" (p. 232). Verner's view was supported by Selman and Dampier (1991) who suggested looking at the individual's circumstances and using these to suggest that he or she is an adult. They cited age, psychological maturity, and social role as

distinguishing elements, though not the only criteria, that can be used to define who is an adult. With regard to the Coal Branch, The Mines Act of 1913 stated that no boy under the age of sixteen could be employed underground and the age at which a boy could be employed above the ground was raised from twelve to fourteen in Alberta (Ross, 1974). For purposes of this study, an adult is someone aged 16 or over who is no longer in the public grade school system.

The scope of adult learning is very broad and can include the multitude of organizations and nonschool agencies which provide learning opportunities for adults as well as the traditional, formal settings. Adult learning can mean improved use of leisure time in family life and in community development. Indeed it includes any aspect of human endeavor that may assist people to live more happily and intelligently. The different parts of adult learning in this study are defined under various classifications including activities, content, agents, functions, and categories.

Activities

With the definition of learning being so broad, it follows that the activities of adult learning will be equally as expansive. Allen Tough (1971) defined a learning activity as "a deliberate effort to gain certain knowledge and skill (or to change in some way)" (p. 1). The wide range of learning activities was illustrated in Mewhort's 1959 Report to the Toronto Board of Education which defined adult learning activities as being:

...those which present opportunities for continuing growth, increasing knowledge, improving skills, the maturing of attitudes and the development of social competence. (p. 2)

This definition included activities both formal (institution-based, structured) and informal (less structured, often unintentional). The kind of learning activities chosen arise from the characteristics of the world around us at the time and these characteristics have implications with respect to the functions of adult learning. From another perspective, Houle's (1961) study, The Inquiring Mind, suggested three positions that prompt adults to learn and continue their education: the goal-oriented, those who use education as a means of accomplishing clear-cut objectives; the activity-oriented, those who take part for reasons other than the purpose of the activity (for example, loneliness); and the learning-oriented, those who seek knowledge for its own sake (p. 15).

Functions

In the literature reviewed, materials about the functions of adult learning generally addressed the debate between the individual point of view and the social perspective. Selman and Dampier (1991) viewed adult education as predominantly a social activity "responding to the circumstances and agenda of the community within which it functions" (p. 63). The functions are vocational, social, recreational, and self-development. A number of other educators support the social view of adult learning. For example, activities for social betterment and for improving the quality of individual life and thought was strongly advocated by the leaders of the Antigonish Movement, Tompkins and Coady (1939). Another educator interested in the social

view was Jarvis (1985) who identified the functions of adult learning as (a) maintenance of the social system, (b) transmission of knowledge and the reproduction of culture, (c) individual advancement and selection (d) leisure time pursuit and institutional expansion, and (e) development and liberation (p. 135).

These social views reflect the characteristics of Canada at a time when immigrants were arriving in large numbers and the socialization of the new citizens was a concern of government. The Coal Branch was populated largely by immigrants, and education in the sense of helping people learn new roles or improve the quality of their lives was a relevant concept for this study.

The concept that both formal and informal learning activities reflect and respond to the social context was prevalent in the adult education literature and many examples in Canadian history exist. The desperate economic conditions of the Maritimes spawned the Antigonish Movement; the isolation of prairie farms the Farm Radio Forum, the monotony of northern bush camps the Frontier College; the vastness of this country the National Film Board; women's desire for better conditions the Women's Institutes; and the influx of immigrants Citizenship educational programs. On the informal level, groups arose spontaneously out of special local circumstances. The examples cited above are essentially of informal learning activities for social or economic purposes, demonstrating that a great amount of learning can be seen as a social activity. Learning as a social activity is particularly relevant in this study.

However, not all writers saw the function of adult learning as social. Bergevin (1967) stressed the development of the individual and saw the functions of adult

education in terms of developing communication skills and flexibility, improving human relations, and expediting personal growth in order to achieve meaning and happiness in life, help the learner understand him or herself, recognize the need for lifelong learning, and provide education for survival.

Roby Kidd (1968) extended the area of adult learning activities beyond formal education to include both the individual and the social perspective as functions: to develop one country and many cultures, to replace loneliness and apathy with engagement and involvement, and to become capable in areas of public responsibility.

It is obvious from the literature that individual learning spills over into learning in a social context, a concept which Hely (1962) summarized: "adult learning...must stimulate in each person the demand and the capacity to take part in the development of the cultural life of his day" (p. 27). Certainly an individual acquires these characteristics and can apply them in a community setting and the individual perspective and the social one work hand in hand.

Content

Literature on adult learning gives more attention to that content which is visible, formal, and usually provided by public and private agencies. However, the content of informal adult learning can cover very broad fields including academic, fine arts, crafts, health, vocational, recreational, remedial, and general interest. It is difficult to provide a complete picture of the content of adult learning, particularly that which is included in informal learning. There are no subjects which are not appropriate content for adult learning since its content must be determined by the interests of the

adults (Cross, 1988, Knowles, 1978).

Agents and Agencies

The providers of adult learning opportunities are referred to as agents or agencies of learning. Selman and Dampier (1991) cited an agent as "any organization that is involved in sponsoring opportunities for adult education" (p. 93). Blakely (1960) spoke of agents or agencies:

Adult education is carried on by informal educational institutions such as libraries, museums, theatres, orchestras, etc...Adult education is carried on by our social organizations, corporations, unions, government agencies, etc....Adult education is carried on in the vast skein of voluntary organizations: churches, neighbourhood groups, community committees, clubs and councils, societies, federations, leagues, and so on....(p. 4)

Those organizations referred to in this study include community clubs and associations through which learning experiences were formal or informal as well as to institutional programs of a formal nature.

Literature reviewed in the area of labour education revealed that unions were involved in a variety of learning activities. Thomas (1993) indicated that unions "established their own educational programs, seeking only occasional assistance from the formal educational agencies" (p. 35). They emphasized training in preparing members for roles within the representation and bargaining system. However, their programs were often broader than the courses suggest and members learned to identify issues, seek out knowledge needed, and develop a plan to bring about change. Often they tried to educate the community in a particular issue as well. Informal learning in unions occurs all the time, both individually and in groups. Bruce Spencer (1995) in

his Foundations of Adult Education course manual stated that unions have a collective purpose and provide opportunities for adult learning of a social nature for working people.

Voluntary associations also provided learning opportunities for adults in the Coal Branch. Houle (1972) said, "All groups are learning groups in the sense that their members are constantly influenced by interaction with one another" (p. 102).

Organized groups tend to concentrate on special fields of interest and to attract special audiences. Their efforts to bring about improvements in the community and in quality of personal life are evident in clubs and organizations that require members to have a special knowledge of certain issues. To convey this knowledge, printed matter, talks, and discussion groups are used. Citizens are informed through women's clubs, parent-teacher associations, service clubs, book clubs, and so on. In Studying Your Community, sociologist Warren (1955) saw voluntary associations as having broad educational aims, intentionally or unintentionally, to enlighten their members and sometimes the whole community in a variety of concerns.

Frameworks for Categorization

Various approaches have been taken in attempts to classify adult learning under its agencies, content, and categories. Learning activities can be organized under content as suggested by Aslanian and Brickell (1980): career, family, leisure, art, health, religion, and citizenship. In a similar vein, the 1984 Statistics Canada Adult Education Survey identified five categories of adult learning activities: academic; job-related; personal development/general interest; hobby/craft/ recreation; and other. Other

programs designed to provide adult learning were cited by Houle (1992) and encompassed health, family, union, women's education, community development, education for older people, human resources development, religious adult education, adult literacy, as well as art and world affairs. Other authors have included a variety of themes such as leisure education, consumer education, and intercultural education.

One of the most comprehensive frameworks was presented by Warren (1955): economic (service clubs, Chambers of Commerce, professional organizations), political (party organizations, patriotic organizations), religious (church groups, lodges), educational (home and school, community education, correspondence, organizations whose main purpose is education), recreational (youth group parent organizations, athletic groups, commercialized recreation with adult education aspects), health and welfare (specific disease societies, safety, charitable organizations, community health groups), and special interest (concert, art, literary societies, drama groups, hobby groups, other).

A schema which influenced the categorization of the adult learning activities and opportunities in this study was devised by Edwin Parker and William Paisley (1966) in a research contract for the Office of Education, United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. They categorized the sources of education and information that adults turn to and cited three broad fields: (1) participation in formal adult education, (2) use of the mass media, and (3) interpersonal contact (see Figure 2, Parker's Typology).



Summary

The literature reviewed for this study indicated that the history of adult education in Canada is a field of rich inquiry and continues to be written, and that there is as yet no comprehensive history of adult education in Alberta. It revealed a diversity of instruments through which adults can study and learn and the nature of the scope of all the existing resources that could furnish learning opportunities for adults. In this chapter I have defined and described adult learning according to selected literature in the field. I have also defined the terms as they will be used in this study. The history of this country, and the Coal Branch especially, is filled with activities, experiences, events, and opportunities which in retrospect are adult learning. In the next chapter I present in detail the research design and methodology used to conduct the investigation.

Chapter 3 Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

For many months before beginning to work on my thesis I was obsessed with the prospect of carrying out such a study. I mentally calculated day after day how I would go about collecting the data and became increasingly excited about the venture. At the August 1995 Coal Branch Reunion in Cadomin, Alberta, I took the opportunity to speak with people about my proposed research and received immediate and enthusiastic support. I returned home with more names, telephone numbers, and suggestions than I thought I could ever use. I began to discuss adult learning activities in the Coal Branch with members of my family and with friends and acquaintances who had also resided in the area. By November of 1995 I had gleaned considerable information which, together with my own knowledge of the area and the topic, I began to put to paper. As my colleagues learned about my proposed study, almost daily I was given more suggestions and information: a name here, an article there. I knew it was time for formal data collection to begin. I would need documentation, archival support, and taped oral evidence to validate all that I had been told to this point. I began data collection in earnest in January of 1996. Most of the data were collected by the following April.

The purpose of my study was to evoke, by use of illustration, a sense of the nature and diversity of adult learning opportunities in the Alberta Coal Branch from 1911 to 1958. I therefore had to make an effort to examine the particulars in the hope that details would reveal the larger picture. Through a course in historical research

methods I became aware that "historical investigation generally is considered part of the qualitative research tradition in education" (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 806). Sharon Merriam (1988) defined a case study as "an examination of one setting, one single subject, one single depository of documents, or some particular event (p. 195). I deemed the case study method appropriate since the focus of this examination was on the adult learning opportunities undertaken by residents of the Alberta Coal Branch to achieve a better quality of life.

Within qualitative research, the methodology is an evolving process and needs to be flexible enough for the researcher to work with emerging questions and themes throughout the data collection process (Patton, 1990) and while the design includes specific plans for a major focus, the researcher should have the flexibility to "change and alter research methods if the need arises" (p. 61). Case study methodology often incorporates a variety of qualitative data collection methods. My research design would be a case study guided by qualitative principles.

The remainder of this chapter discusses what data were required, how data were collected, and how analyzed. The data collection is further discussed under rationale, sampling, and procedures.

Data Required

The purpose of the study was to examine the various formal and nonformal adult learning activities and opportunities that took place in the isolated mining towns of the Alberta Coal Branch. Guiding the study were two subquestions:

1. What was the nature of the adult learning in the Coal Branch?

2. Who and what provided the learning opportunities?

To find the answers to these subquestions I would need to find out what opportunities existed for adult learning in the Coal Branch. Specifically, the data required would include what courses were available, what organizations existed, how the immigrants learned English and Canadian ways, what newspapers and radio programs were available, and what the social conditions were at that time. Through suggestion from my supervisor, I wrote to Gordon Selman, a well-known historian in the field of adult education. His communication to me provided several additional insights into how I might approach my study.

Data Collection

I collected the data through interviewing former residents of the Coal Branch and through archival documentation. I conducted a focus group interview and two semi-structured personal interviews. In addition, I was born and raised in Luscar, Alberta, one of the larger towns in the Coal Branch, and have a good understanding of the geographical area, the social context, and the people themselves. I have maintained contact with many former residents, attending annual reunions on-site in the Coal Branch as well as other functions for former residents where I have listened to many a story of those years past. While the historical data that is presented in the following pages was based on the sources indicated, my own experiences in the Coal Branch were valuable in analyzing the documents examined and the data otherwise obtained.

Focus Group

Rationale. The focus group interview provided an opportunity for informal, interactive discussion. Kreuger (1988) defined focus groups as having the following characteristics: (a) people, who (b) possess certain characteristics, (c) provide data, (d) of a qualitative nature, (e) in a focused discussion (p. 27). Using the focus group technique, I was able to gather far more detail about the events than would be found in a written record of the same event. The taped interviews were a useful tool for supplementing the written word and a valuable source of information.

The success of the outcome of any focus group is limited by the skills of the researcher as moderator. Good interviewing skills are mandatory for conducting interviews. I was confident in my skills in this area as for several years I have taught interview and leadership skills as part of a business communications course. I have been part of interview committees on numerous occasions. I have also acted as moderator for various groups and occasions in the community in which I live and I feel comfortable in this position. In addition, I observed a focus group in action in January, 1996, and served as assistant in another focus group early in February, 1996. Focus groups have limitations that affect the quality of the results in that the researcher has less control than in individual interviews. Data are difficult to analyze, groups are difficult to assemble, and the discussion must be conducted in a conducive environment (Kreuger, 1988).

I found support for the use of oral evidence in the writings of the historian Tosh (1984) who stated "that oral history is an important source of data not available

in written records and therefore contributes to knowledge unavailable from existing records." (p. 172). Tosh cited a growing interest in the validity and use of oral evidence in historical enquiry.

Sampling. Ten people were selected for the focus group from a current membership list of the Coal Branch Club which numbers approximately 360 former residents and their families representing nearly all the towns in the Coal Branch. Participants of the focus group were selected through snowball sampling, that is, recommendations from others (committee member, personal contacts) and personal knowledge. Criteria for selection were based on anticipated knowledge of the subject under investigation. The oldest member of the group was my mother who, at 86 years of age, is 100% in command of her mind and body. One other participant was in her 70s and the others ranged in age from 55 to 65 years. The towns of Cadomin, Luscar, Mercoal, and Mountain Park were represented. The following people comprised the focus group:

Elsa Berendt: homemaker, former Luscar resident.
Agnes Brennan: former resident of Cadomin, Luscar, and Mountain Park.
Mary Carey: former Mountain Park resident, homemaker.
Jack Chesney: former miner, Cadomin.
Gloria Dagil: former schoolteacher and Mountain Park resident.
Ernie Foss: former miner and Mercoal resident.
Mary Liviero: former schoolteacher at Mountain Park.
Vivian Melnyk: former schoolteacher and Cadomin resident.
Peggy Mitchell: wife of pit boss, Luscar.
Beate Wenzel: former Luscar resident.

Sampling imposed some limitations in this study. Forty years have passed since the closing of the towns of the Coal Branch and fewer and fewer respondents with first hand knowledge are available for interviewing. Many former residents now reside

in other parts of Canada or in other countries and were unavailable for this study.

There are some omissions and I ask the reader's indulgence. To cover every activity of every community over a period of 47 years would exceed the limitations of this study.

Data, both oral and archival, were found for the towns of Cadomin, Coalspur, Coal Valley, Foothills, Lovett, Luscar, Mercoal, Mountain Park, and Sterco. The towns of Bryan and Robb are not represented but generally most information would apply to them. Kaydee and Leland were smaller camps situated close to larger towns and used their facilities.

Procedures. I scheduled the focus group for Sunday, February 18, 1996, from 12:00 noon to approximately 2:30 p.m. Sunday seemed to be the best day since most of the participants, though retired, were busy with other activities during the week. Three weeks earlier, I had tentatively booked the meeting room of the Bethel Seniors Lodge in south Edmonton which I was able to secure free of charge because my mother is a resident there. I then contacted potential participants by telephone. In each case, the response was very gratifying. However, almost all expressed concern that they did not believe they had anything to contribute. Of the ten calls I made, only two were unavailable on the date chosen. They, without hesitation, provided me with alternate names and phone numbers. The next step was to send a letter of invitation and confirmation of details to each participant. Three days prior to the interview, I telephoned them once more as a reminder. I had arranged for a fellow graduate student who had experience with focus groups to accompany me as my assistant. I had also reserved a microphone and tape recorder from Instructional Resource Services at the

University of Alberta and supplied myself with extra tapes, batteries, and an extension cord. Forms of consent were prepared, a copy of which can be found in Appendix A of this study.

At 10 a.m. I went to the Lodge and made sandwiches and prepared the room. Tables were set in a square so people could face one another. My assistant set up the tape recording equipment, set out the food at a separate table, and prepared name cards. I felt I had prepared every detail to make the event run smoothly.

People began to arrive at 11:30 a.m. and although I had never met most of them before, it took only moments for the ice to break. There were hand-shakes, slaps on the back, and even hugs. It was fun to see looks of surprise and recognition as one by one they arrived. I was beginning to fear a "party" atmosphere and how I was going to settle them down. However, I directed them to the food, and after 20 minutes or so they gathered around the table. I began with "housekeeping": bathroom location, availability of food any time, name cards, consent forms, tape-recording permission, and speaking protocol. I assured them of confidentiality and anonymity. They, in turn, assured me that they wouldn't mind at all if their names appeared in the study. I introduced my assistant and then reacquainted them with the purpose of the gathering.

The focus group was formally opened with a question of a general nature which allowed the group to cover the whole range of adult activities, and then allowed to unfold in its own way. Many of the group said they recalled no adult education but as the interview proceeded they produced an abundance of illustrations of adult learning. They had simply not considered applying the term learning to their efforts

and activities. I asked more specific questions structured to further explore their perspectives regarding learning opportunities. The questions approximated those outlined in the purpose statement of this study.

The main problem encountered in the focus group was a sometimes over-abundant amount of enthusiasm, so much so that at times everyone spoke at once and later parts of the tape were extremely difficult to understand. It was obvious that Coal Branchers love to get together and reminisce about their lives there. Each comment, however earnest, spawned a story or anecdote. As in every group, there were the shy ones and the not-so-shy ones and perhaps the outbreaks of enthusiasm deterred some from trying to speak out. I tried to draw out the quieter ones. Some participants had brought photos and scrapbooks, valuable evidence indeed; however, time was a problem in viewing them.

In the end, however, the advantages of the focus group outweighed the disadvantages. It was a pleasant afternoon of socializing for the participants and difficult though it was to keep people focussed, it was a fruitful event for me. A couple of people had taken the time to write out their information beforehand, and left it with me. I adjourned the interview at approximately 2:15 p.m. and presented each participant with a University of Alberta pen. All felt they had more to say and that I should call them if I needed more information.

Individual Interviews

Rationale. In addition to the focus group, I conducted two semi-structured personal interviews on March 8 and April 2, 1996. These two personal interviews

allowed me to probe more deeply into some areas of discussion than I was able to in the focus group interview.

Sampling. A former teacher from Mountain Park, Mary Liviero, and her sister, Gloria Dagil, both of whom were participants in the focus group, felt they could contribute far more than they had in the focus group. The second interview was with a former school teacher from Cadomin, Anne Gerlitz, who had lived there for 30 years and had herself written many articles, some of which have been published. Since she was physically unable to leave her residence for the focus group she requested that I come there. A third party, Barbara Higgins, who had heard about my research telephoned me from her residence in Cadomin in May, and offered not only her knowledge, but an invitation to come out there. Unfortunately, circumstances did not allow me to take advantage of this excellent opportunity.

Procedure. I was invited to conduct the interview with Mary and Gloria at Mary's home at 10 a.m. on March 8, 1996. They were very gracious hosts with coffee and fresh baking set out on the kitchen table "Coal Branch style." Since they were already aware of the questions, they had prepared a written outline to follow which they embellished with more detail. I tape-recorded the session and since it was informal, I felt comfortable interjecting questions for clarification as we went along. For the second interview with Anne, I called her residence at Meadowcroft Seniors Lodge and arranged for a 1:30 p.m. visit with her on April 2, 1996. She had her own writings available for me to look at and had also prepared an outline of what she could remember about adult learning activities in the Coal Branch. Anne was full of

stories and after two hours we concluded the interview. This interview was also tape-recorded.

Archival Sources

Rationale. The historical nature and the case study aspect of this thesis structured the research strategies selected. As well as data collected through interviews, archival documentation formed an integral part of the research. To increase the probability of a trustworthy study, triangulation is important. Leedy (1993) defined triangulation as "the use of two or more methods of data collection procedures within a single study" (p 143). In this investigation, I looked for archival documentation which supported the oral evidence, and oral evidence which supplemented the archival documentation, the secondary sources, and my own personal knowledge. In preparation for the many hours to be spent searching through the archives, I took a course, as mentioned previously, in historical research methods. Through the course I learned the necessity of checking for authenticity of the documentation and the importance of objectivity on the part of the researcher. I have attempted to concentrate on valid data that are representative of a full and reliable picture of adult learning opportunities and in this way achieve the desired trustworthiness.

Sampling or Sources. Archival sources included original University of Alberta Department of Extension Annual Reports; a thesis by Andy den Otter (1967) entitled, "A Social History of the Alberta Coal Branch"; newspapers; (the Edson Leader; the Western Star, the Edson Critic, the Western Leader, and the Edson-Jasper Signal; the Parklander "Luscar Comeback" souvenir issue, 1970); interviews of six Coal Branch

old-timers taped by den Otter in 1967; notes and reports of former Cadomin mine engineer Nick Melnyk; records of Catholic, Anglican, and United Churches; minutes of Oddfellows and Rebekahs Lodges; a photograph album courtesy of Charles Lee of Mountain Park; personal journals, diaries, letters, scrapbooks, photographs, and secondary materials which included historical information about the Coal Branch. Useful secondary sources included personal copies of Oh! The Coal Branch (1974) by Toni Ross of Edson; Luscar Comeback (1978) by Joyce Jackson; The Luscar Story (1985) compiled by Allen Maydonik of Luscar Limited; Edson--75 Years by Marguerite Ahlf (1986); Boss Whistle (1986) by Lynne Bowen; and My Life on the Alberta Coal Branch (1993) by Vern Hughes. I had read the books for enjoyment in the past and I now reread them, noting relevant information for my research.

Archival documentation is limited by the recollective abilities of their authors and in their biases. Due to the nature of historical material, I am assuming that understandings of the materials are influenced by the interpretation of the authors and that data gathered from printed materials were accurately presented.

Procedures. I visited the following sites for archival documentation: The Provincial Archives in Edmonton; The Glenbow Museum and Archives in Calgary; the University of Alberta Archives in Edmonton; The Society for the Retired and Semi-Retired Heritage Library in Edmonton; The Edson Public Library and Archives in Edson; and the Bruce Peel Special Collections in the Rutherford Library in Edmonton. I made several visits to Luscar Limited in Edmonton to request permission to view mining archives which I felt may have yielded information regarding mine-sponsored

training courses. I was not successful because the company after 70 years in business was in the process of being sold which made the possibility of using company records for data collection at this time remote.

At the Provincial Archives, I was fortunate to be able to listen to four hours of previously taped interviews (den Otter, 1967) which proved very valuable to my research. I also gleaned data from the personal notes by former Cadomin mine engineer Nick Melnyk as well as the minutes of the official board of the three main church denominations. The records of the Roman Catholic Church were very detailed but were in French. Unfortunately, the records of the United and Anglican Churches were mainly lists of members as opposed to details of activities.

On February 19, 1996, I visited the Glenbow Museum in Calgary and found records of the Oddfellows Lodge, some photographs, and the newspaper Edmonton Bulletin archives. I experienced an unexpected problem while viewing microfiche--I found that the constant necessity for adjustment on the screen caused nausea and I had to take many breaks.

A morning spent at the University of Alberta Archives off-site location looking through Department of Extension annual reports revealed only a small amount of useful information.

My visit to the Society for the Retired and Semi-Retired in Edmonton was fruitful. Their small collection yielded rich data through a photograph album donated by the Charles Lee family of Mountain Park as well as the publication Alberta History with issues dating back to the 1920s. The volunteer staff were well-acquainted with all

their materials and were able to pinpoint very quickly any relevant articles. One of the volunteers had herself resided in the town of Luscar and very willingly provided me with a few "off-the-record" details.

On March 10 I visited the Edson Public Library and Archives in Edson, Alberta. The archivist unfortunately had crushed two of her fingers and was unavailable. However, the librarians were knowledgeable about the Coal Branch area and were very willing to help me find material. They brought out scrapbooks, clippings, photographs, and other memorabilia. The most valuable information was contained in 45 years worth of microfiche of old Edson area newspapers. I was allowed to photocopy material from the original newspapers as the facility there is not equipped with a printer. After burying myself in the small archives room for five hours I was invited into the staff room for a much-appreciated hot cup of tea. All day reading the microfiche in the tiny archives room yielded only two years' worth of newspaper data and I realized it would take many more trips to go through all 47 years of the material. However, I later discovered with joy that the some of the microfiche material was available to me at the Provincial Archives in Edmonton.

A possible source for potential error in my data collection would be my upbringing in the Coal Branch in the sense that perhaps I would be looking through rose-colored glasses. I left the area at the age of 13 but have very strong memories and ties to the Coal Branch to this day, returning annually to show my children and relive the good times. I recognize my possible bias.

Data Analysis

Focus Group

The data obtained in the focus group provided an overview of adult learning opportunities in the Coal Branch. I was provided with a first-hand look by eye witnesses at the events that were being studied. I transcribed the tapes of the focus group that same night. Analyzing results from the focus groups was done by reading the transcripts. Patton (1990) suggested that analysis in qualitative research is best done inductively, and therefore formal analysis does not begin until data collection is near completion. The inductive approach required that I immerse myself in the materials in order to identify the various dimensions and categories that seem meaningful. Merriam (1988) added that data analysis in qualitative research "very much depends on the investigator's sensitivity and analytic skills" (p 121). I listed all the organizations and opportunities for adult learning that were mentioned in the focus group.

Individual Interviews

By transcribing the tapes and listening to them over and over I identified the learning activities and opportunities that the interviewees recalled. As I had done with the focus group data, I listed all the organizations that were mentioned.

Archival Materials

Objectivity and interpretation is of great importance in studies that deal with the past. Researchers must rely on information that has already been recorded by someone else or as seen from their perspective. The inclusion of the context is a major

part of case study analysis (Yin, 1993). In addition, Yin stated that the case study method should be part of the analysis of archival records and historiography. By sifting through the notes and photocopies I had made from the archival materials I was able to add more examples of adult learning organizations and opportunities to the oral data. Categorization was difficult because of the complexity of adult learners in a variety of settings and formats. After trying several different methods, I placed the various activities in categories based on a typology devised by Edwin Parker and Paisley (1966) which I modified to suit my data.

Summary

This chapter has described in detail the research design and methodology of this study. The findings are presented in the next two chapters. In the next chapter, I organize the somewhat chaotic content and data which resulted from the focus group, interviews, and personal communication and present a framework to aid understanding of adult learning activities and opportunities in the Coal Branch.

Chapter 4 Presentations of Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents a description of the mosaic of adult learning activities and opportunities in the Coal Branch as found in the focus group and interviews. A typology is introduced which allows the learning opportunities, activities, and providers to be organized and provides the structure for the findings of the research. The findings of the focus group and the two personal interviews are combined in their presentation since the same questions were used for each. For convenience and to avoid repetition, I have omitted the word Edson from the names of the newspapers, all of which originated from the town of Edson.

The major intention of this study was to describe the adult learning activities in the remote setting of the Coal Branch and to provide a framework for understanding the richness of the adult learning that took place. Through archival documentation and interviewing of former residents, the various formal and informal adult learning activities and opportunities that took place in the isolated mining towns of the Alberta Coal Branch during its life span from 1911 to 1958 are examined. There were two central questions to be answered:

1. What was the nature of the adult learning in the Coal Branch?
2. Who and what provided opportunities for adult learning?

Data were accessed through archival document analysis, two personal interviews, and a focus group interview. In the interviews I rephrased the first subquestion and asked how and by what means people learned. The responses led to

the next subquestion, who or what provided the learning opportunities. A classification system for the learning opportunities had to be planned that would be suitable for the context of the Coal Branch. To effect this, I sorted the responses according to themes arising from the transcripts of the focus group and interviews. Few typologies, however, are satisfactory and at times I felt I was forcing the varied activities into categories.

Parker and Paisley (1966), Stanford University, devised a scheme represented in Figure 2 in which they categorized educational and information sources that adults turn to most often.

Adult Education	Mass Media	Interpersonal
Evening classes Correspondence On-the-job Group discussions T.V. lessons Private teacher Self-study	T.V.--serious Radio Newspapers Magazines Books Pamphlets Observation of the environment	Friends/family Experts/strangers Groups

Figure 2: Parker's typology of sources adults turn to for education and knowledge

I adapted Parker's typology by adding formal to adult education; removing references to television, self-study, and family; grouping books, newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets as printed materials; adding film under mass media; and renaming the third column interactive/life experiences. The modified version as represented in Figure 3

gives a sense of the full range of general sources of learning in the Coal Branch.

Formal Adult Education	Mass Media	Interactive/ Life Experience
Night school Correspondence Job-related training Group discussion Private lessons	Printed materials Radio Film Factors of environment	Resident experts Visitors Friends/Associates Groups

Figure 3: Categories of adult learning opportunities in the Coal Branch

The various activities and opportunities were grouped according to three different means of learning. Accessing learning through formal adult education was the first group. In this group were the more formal or traditional means of learning, that is, structured classes being delivered by trained instructors often in a school or classroom setting and involving accreditation of some sort. Courses or programs were usually sponsored by a government agency or by the union. The central function of activities was to provide training or education. Categories from the data in this group included night school, correspondence, job-related training, discussion groups, and private lessons.

Learning through the mass media was another way the people in the Coal Branch accessed knowledge and information. This learning was informal and largely unintentional, filling a more secondary educational function than the first group. Mass media was a way to circulate knowledge, impart information, give public service

announcements and keep people informed. In order for an item to be included in this domain it had to be accessed directly by the individual. Included in the theme of mass media were printed materials such as books, magazines, and newspapers; radio, film, and observation of the environment (fairs, exhibitions, displays).

In addition to formal adult education and mass media opportunities for adult learning, the people of the Coal Branch learned through and from interactive life experiences. Individuals and organizations where a degree of personal contact was necessary comprised this means of learning. It was the least formal means of learning, much being incidental, and like mass media, unintentional. References to learning through experience and by helping one another was a recurring theme in the focus group data. In some ways it was a theme that blanketed all the others. To be included in this means of learning, the learning activities had to be through experience, practice, demonstration, or group participation. A group is "any collection of human beings which has a common purpose and among whom interaction occurs (Houle, 1971, p. 101). The data involving interactive learning life experiences are presented in these categories: resident experts, visitors, friends and associates, and groups, with the latter divided into types: political and patriotic groups, religious groups, health groups, and recreational groups (athletic, music and arts, community, fraternal, cultural, leisure).

Formal Adult Education

Night School

An important source for learning and what most respondents seemed to associate with adult education was night school. Though night school was not a

predominant form of learning in the Coal Branch, it was crucial in providing a route to job mobility for the miners, particularly the immigrants who required English language skills. Personal communication with former Mountain Park resident Mike Pavich revealed that "a few of the miners, my father and uncle among them, taking one or two evening lessons from the local high school principal in order to improve their English speaking and writing skills, but for some reason (shift work?) it didn't catch on." Focus group participant Mary Carey remembered her mother attending English as a Second Language classes in Mountain Park. As early as 1915, the Alberta Department of Education offered evening courses at Lovett in mining technology, English, and mathematics (Department of Education Annual Report, 1915, p. 63). Classes in Mountain Park in 1920 had enrolments of 9 in mining technology and 20 in English (Annual Report, 1920). The local teachers taught the academic subjects while mine officials presented the mining courses. Classes met twice a week for 16 weeks. Ross (1974) recorded a Mercoal student taking night classes under the tutelage of a Mercoal teacher in 1927, and a December 18, 1930 entry in the Signal reported an enrollment of 12 in mining classes conducted by mine manager J. Stevenson in Mercoal. In Luscar, night school classes were available in 1930 (Jackson, 1978). The

following is a colorful description of the training required for a miner's ticket, underlining the importance of learning for the miner:

My dad used to say, your basic three elements of school are math, science, and geology and they all play a part in mining--coal mining especially. You gotta be able to read the ground, maybe be a bit of a scientist to figure out the structure of it and geology. And mathematics you gotta be able to calculate the risk in the areas where you gotta go into. A miner himself has got to be very skilled and just because he doesn't have an education in school doesn't mean he wasn't skilled labour. For instance, my grandfather never went to school after he was seven years old but there never was a "skillder" miner anywhere around than him. (quoted in Bowen, 1982, p. 226)

Some continuing education courses were available as recalled by focus group participant Vivian Melnyk: "I took night sewing classes from the Home Economics teacher at the new high school in Cadomin along with 10 others. It was very useful. I was pregnant at the time and made all my maternity clothes." At a time when extension and continuing education work was in its infancy, it is remarkable that a remote area like the Coal Branch was served in this way.

Correspondence

While correspondence courses were taken traditionally by high school students who could not get the courses in classroom format, a number of adults enrolled as well. Walter had completed two mathematics courses through the Alberta Correspondence School and he knew of others who had done the same. Focus group participant Jack Chesney volunteered that "The boys returning home after the war took correspondence to complete their schooling." Several respondents pointed out that pit boss and fire boss (mine management positions) papers were taken through

correspondence. I could attest to this as I remember my own father having achieved his pit boss papers in this way. Jack indicated that the men who worked in the power house had to have their "steam ticket" which they "studied for in books or from correspondence and then wrote their exams." An entry in the Signal stated:

It is very pleasing to note that quite a large number of men are taking correspondence courses in a variety of subjects in Coal Valley. Steam engineering seems to be a favorite followed by Bookkeeping, Mathematics, Electricity, and Surveying. (November 20, 1930)

The June 26 issue of the same year reported that in Coal Valley, "Classes are now going run by Mr. Shearer of the Workmen's Compensation Board for Mine Rescue work. Twelve attended the first class." The Workmen's Compensation Board had an established system of training and required a certificate of proficiency for all supervisory personnel (den Otter, p. 105). The Department of Extension offered steam and mining courses in 1947 (Annual Report, 1947).

While the foregoing courses seemed to apply to upgrading of credentials, other correspondence courses were taken for personal interest and knowledge. The hotel owner in Mercoal took correspondence courses in hotel management as recounted by Jack Chesney: "I lived at the hotel for a time. He owned the hotel and had to learn to run it." In Oh! The Coal Branch (1974) Ross refers to the same Mercoal resident taking correspondence courses in hotel management and managerial control: "John kept up his correspondence courses and could be seen pouring over books like Wenzel's Menu Maker - Managerial Control" (p. 305). In another reference, guitar lessons through correspondence were taken by several residents (Ross, 1974) as were

catechism classes.

Job-related training

Job-related training accounted for most of the more formal learning that occurred as noted in the interviews. Training for mine rescue was available through the union and was mandatory for members of the mine rescue teams. Mine rescue training was a requirement for pit boss papers as well. First Aid classes were mandatory for mine rescue and also available for the public. Each community had a mine rescue team and standards were high, as teams had to be kept at peak performance. To accomplish this, competitions among the teams were held often. The Parklander referred to Luscar's "crack" rescue team with its own rescue car. Ross (1974) reported that throughout the summer teams practiced for the Mine Rescue and First Aid Contest, competing for the Coal Branch Championship. The seriousness and high calibre of these competitions is illustrated in the following excerpt listing judges for a competition in 1948:

Judges for the event were

First Aid: Dr. Wilson and Dr. Hebb
Workmen's Compensation Board: J. Young
R.C.M.P.: Commissioner H. Darling
St. John's Ambulance Association: president Mr. E. Emmott
District Mine Inspector: Mr. J. Thompson
Superintendent Mine Rescue Station: Mr. J. McAndrew,
General Superintendent for Alberta, Calgary
Mine Inspector: Mr. A. Muir from Edson. (p. 151)

Jack Roome (taped interview, 1967) described a typical learning situation for

mine rescue:

A piece of apparatus would be explained to a group of fellas. It was hands-on, take apart, put together, until it was second nature. Exercises, practice. You had to learn to regulate your breathing so you could help others. You had to wear air masks. After two weeks of stringent training you would go into a room filled with sulphur to try your equipment. You would have to take timed walks. The training took about 4 months.

Miners were given further opportunities for learning at the frequent miners' conferences that were held. The Signal reported in the November 28, 1930, edition that the Coal Branch held a joint 3-day Miners' Conference in Edson. The February 24, 1938, Signal reported a 2-day conference held at Mountain Park. Demonstrations, safety, collective bargaining, parliamentary procedure, and negotiating techniques were some of the topics explored at the conferences. The 1941 Annual Report of the Department of Extension stated that, "New methods have been tried, notably that of bringing educational facilities right into the Unions by means of speakers and films." It is not known whether the union in the Coal Branch took advantage of these means.

In other job-related training, the school teachers would go out to summer school "pretty well every summer" for more training. In one case, "Nine summer sessions got me my bachelor's degree." Former schoolteachers Anne Gerlitz and Mary Liviero indicated that conventions were held in Edson and teachers' union meetings for the Coal Branch were usually held in Cadomin.

Discussion Groups

Another type of formal learning was discussion groups. These groups, such as the Club of Current Affairs in Cadomin, had education as a primary goal and though

small, were significant both to the learning of the individual taking part and to the society of which they were a part. Personal notes by member Nick Melnyk (April 15, 1947) reported the following:

The purpose of this club was dedicated to the highest constructive ideas that we know. Meetings were once a week and lasted an hour and a half. Activities included a Bible reading with subsequent interpretation by the group; an inspirational reading and source; a song; and presentations on international, national, local and district, and cultural topics such as family or art. Discussion followed. The meetings were closed with a song. Members took part in speaking and in leading the group.

Focus group participant Vivian Melnyk reported having been part of a discussion group: "I was in an organized discussion group with about ten others. We met once a week to discuss anything educational--a book, an article, current events. It was quite structured and well-organized. I enjoyed it." Although the audience for this type of learning was small, the search for knowledge was no doubt carried forward through this medium.

Private Lessons

A variety of private lessons was available to the people of the Coal Branch. There were numerous highly trained instructors particularly in the field of music. Focus group participant Jack Chesney indicated, "You could get trumpet lessons in Cadomin where we had a five-piece band and a symphony orchestra." Mike Pavich recalled that in Mountain Park violin lessons were given by a professor who came in once a week by train "to thrust his skills on us musical dolts." There were numerous piano teachers in each community who offered lessons to young and old alike. Interviewee Anne Gerlitz recalled that in Cadomin tap-dancing lessons were popular

for a time and "a lot of people learned to tap-dance." Learning through private lessons no doubt contributed greatly to the knowledge and skills of individuals; however, lessons were not a predominant form of adult learning.

When asked about the Chautauquas, people had heard of them but indicated they never reached the camps of the Coal Branch. However, in the nearby mining camp of Pocahontas, Frontier College was active (Fitzpatrick, 1920) and in 1920 when that mine closed (communication with George Ford, former Pocahontas and Cadomin resident), many of the miners went to the Coal Branch to work.

Mass Media

Printed Materials

The types of print media that were most commonly available in the Coal Branch were books. Nearly all books contribute to some kind of learning, whether knowledge, skills, attitudes, or feelings. Libraries were the obvious resource for books and the opportunity for learning which they provide, and libraries were found in all the communities of the Coal Branch. Maydonik (1985) reported that clubs provided libraries and newspapers. Former Mountain Park miner Alex Valla (taped interview, 1967) spoke of 1,500 books in the Mountain Park Library and a reading room. The library was owned by the Social Club and was "for the miners and run by the Social Club. Twenty-five cents of every paycheck went to the Social Club." Ross (1974) reported that in Mountain Park in 1916, the hotel manager invited the Library Committee to "fit up the library and reading room at the hotel" (p. 45). By 1919 the library was in its own building as evidenced by a photograph in the archives (see

Figure 5). Mike Pavich described the three-room library in Mountain Park:

The largest room was the miners' club room with round tables and chairs where the men often played checkers or cards--mostly bridge or cribbage. A smaller room was used as a reading room and was furnished with comfortable arm-rest chairs and a magazine rack. Kids were not allowed in there. A third rather small room had two walls of floor-to-ceiling shelves with a good number of novels which residents could sign out. There was, I think, a good mix of books.

Mary Liviero, whose father was on the Library Committee in Mountain Park, offered that the school libraries were funded by the mine and were extremely well-stocked. The adult library was also well-stocked and contained some foreign books and newspapers. Personal communication with former Mountain Park resident Loretta Morrison indicated that her father loved to read and would spend a lot of time at the library in Mountain Park.

In 1929, Cadomin opened the new reading room and library in that community (Ross, 1974). The library was well-used according to former schoolteacher Anne Gerlitz: "It wasn't too bad. They had it in the community hall. All the towns had libraries. I had quite a collection of my own books so I didn't use it very often myself." The Signal (March 28, 1940) reported that a public library was being built in Sterco under the direction of Percy Mellet who aimed to collect 1,000 books to start the library on its way. Rose Bovo, in personal conversation, observed that the library in Luscar was very small and not well-used at the time she was librarian. "I spent most of my time dusting the books." Focus group participant Agnes Brennan added that "The teachers always made sure there were National Geographics available and we could, and did, take them home."

Other comments with regard to printed media included, "I remember mom always reading books whenever she could," and "Every family I knew owned a set of Encyclopedias." In the case of my own family, I can hardly recall a memory of my father without a book being part of the memory--history books and maps in particular.

Magazines were widely read. Chatelaine and Liberty were popular choices. Former Mountain Park resident Mike Pavich remembered that "Us kids were not allowed in the library but I remember as a young teen sneaking in to scan the latest Life, Look, Time, and Newsweek." Many people subscribed to magazines. Anne Gerlitz named The London Weekly and New Statesman in her collection. Extremely important as a learning source were the hobby magazines such as Outdoor Life and Popular Mechanics. Focus group participant Vivian Melnyk credited magazines for helping her father get into business. She related, "He used to get lumbering magazines and he'd just pour over them. He learned so much from them--all about bulldozers. He had the first bulldozer in the Coal Branch and operated a business from the ideas he got from those magazines." Not to be overlooked for keeping people up-to-date in fashion and the latest conveniences was the Eaton's catalogue, found in every home.

Newspapers were read by practically all adults who were capable of reading and the photographs they contain by an even larger number. Everyone could afford a newspaper. Newspapers arrived in the Coal Branch three times a week. Focus group participant Jack Chesney recalled his boyhood job of delivering the Star Weekly and the Edmonton Bulletin to nearly every house for "a nickel a copy, three times a week." Former Luscar resident Agnes Brennan passed around a 1954 copy of Luscar's

Moonshine Star. Newspapers circulating in the Coal Branch as early as 1913 included The Western Star, the Edson Critic, the Edson Leader, the Western Leader, the Edson Herald, and the Edson-Jasper Signal (Edson Public Library Archives). The Leader contained an array of interesting and educational material which readers would have been exposed to including sections on famous sayings, sewing directions, health matters, word meanings, history, guest article, world news, business and finance, beauty notes, recipes, agricultural conditions, nutrition news, photography tips, book reviews, and serials. I was amazed to discover an editorial article in the March 26, 1936 Leader entitled "Adult Education." A rarely-used term in that era, it indicated a growing interest in education for adults even in the smaller locales of Alberta. Mountain Park had a newsstand (Ross, 1974) where magazines, pocket books, and newspapers were available.

Newsletters sent out by the union kept the populace informed on safety concerns, news from the legislature, statistics, strikes, wages, and contained a feature story (Alberta Federation of Labor newsletter, 1940). Nick Melnyk's detailed notetaking listed reading materials that were available and in some cases required reading from The Department of Mines and the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. The Mines Act, The Western Miner (1945), The Journal of Canadian Petroleum, and various abstracts, reviews, and briefs were either required reading or subscribed to and made available. Monthly union newsletters were received by each miner. Focus group participant Mary Liviero indicated, "It was an American publication, I believe from Illinois." The publication appeared to contain something of

interest for everyone. The importance of reading materials was illustrated in an interesting note about the Coal Branch in the publication Edson--75 Years: "In the isolation of the construction camps (every 12 miles) all were welcome, and doubly so if they had some reading material to share" (p. 8).

Radio

Radio in the Coal Branch was critical both for entertainment and for unintentional learning and connected people to the outside world. Former Luscar resident Beate Wenzel recalled, "At our house, everything stopped for the 10 o'clock news or for any major news event. I remember our dad getting us out of bed at 2 a.m. to gather round the radio and listen to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth." Focus group participant Gloria Dagil attributed the learning of English by immigrant women to soaps like Ma Perkins. Programs such as Flibber McGee and Molly, Lux Radio Theatre, The Shadow, and The Happy Gang were mentioned by several participants. Hockey, of course, drew a faithful listening audience as I well remember in my own experience having to be quiet while my brothers and my father hung on every word. The photograph collection of Mrs. Charlie Lee of Mountain Park in the Heritage Library showed residents of that community gathered around to listen to the latest newscast. CKUA archival records revealed such broadcasts as Round Table, Question Box, Romance of Canada, and The Music Hour to have been popular listening choices for rural Albertans in the 30s. The July 13, 1943, minutes of the Alberta Committee on Adult Education found in the Provincial Archives reported a series on CKUA of half-hour broadcasts consisting of music at the beginning and end, announcements of

adult education activities, and content revolving around social change. The program ran after supper in early evening which would have been a time that families relaxed after the evening meal. There was no television to compete with and often a good radio program provided an opportunity for people to turn their thoughts from the cares of daily living to something else. The Women's Institute ran a half-hour program every Saturday morning which was much anticipated by its members as they heard about events from sister groups throughout Alberta, Canada, and the world. Edson--75 Years described how radio in the 1930s and 40s "broadened our horizons" (p. 46) citing examples such as the Springhill Mine Disaster, the funeral of George V, the abdication of Edward VIII, the coronation of George VI, and World War II. Radio played an important role in the development of the western musical group of some recognition from Foothills, The Romaniuk Family as illustrated in the following account from Ross (1974):

In 1933, dad bought our first radio and gramophone combination. This was the Golden Age of country music and Ann would copy all the songs that were being played by country artists....There was one particular program that we remember very well, 'Kernel Corn' from Sacramento. Elsie and I stayed up very late to listen to this 11:00 p.m. to midnight show so we could copy and learn every Carter song....Many of the songs were played over and over again and we were soon able to learn them.

A clipping from the September 4, 1930, Signal reported on the success of Radio Dances in Mercoal. As a vehicle for adult learning, however, radio did not figure prominently in the lives of Coal Branchers other than for those who had specific reasons for listening to certain programs. On the other hand, for the geographically isolated citizens of the Coal Branch, for poor readers, and for busy immigrant

housewives, radio provided an especially good resource for incidental learning.

Film

Film as used in the Coal Branch probably had more entertainment value than actual learning potential. Nonetheless, some learning through film did occur. The personal notes of former Cadomin resident Nick Melnyk (1942) recorded showings of Royal Canadian Wild Life Shows but did not say who sponsored these showings. The 1947 superintendent's report for School Division #58 stated that the Cadomin School sponsored a first aid film at the local theatre to raise funds for the Sports and Amusement Association. During the second World War, the National Film Board created a scheme to educate people via the screen (Welton, 1987). They influenced people on subjects like citizenship and social change, war effort, etc. It is likely that the film showings in Coal Valley of the Crippled Children's Hospital in Calgary (Signal, November 6, 1952) was a National Film Board production. There were theatres in all the towns with twice weekly showings. A newsreel preceded the main feature and often a National Film Board "short" such as Perils of the Forest would be shown as well. In an interesting aside, Jackson (1978) reported organized sing-songs during the reel changes.

Factors of Environment

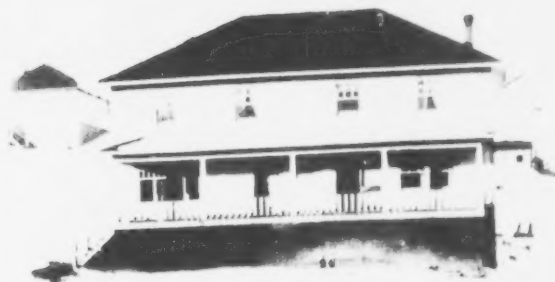
When well-conducted, exhibits, fairs, and displays can have considerable learning consequences. Some people learn simply through their own observations of what is going on around them and many Coal Branchers took advantage of the esthetic setting of the area for this type of learning. By observing the animals, the terrain, the

vegetation, and the climate, they learned how to appreciate the land and to live off the land. Through bazaars and craft displays, people exhibited jars of fruit and jams made from blueberries, huckleberries, and raspberries; wild meat and fish recipes; canned mushrooms; animal pelts, carvings, and scenic photographs of the area. Mining displays were periodically put on by the mine rescue team which were "most interesting and informative" (Anne Gerlitz).

Figure 4: Mountain Park in 1935 depicting scenic environment of area (Heritage Library, Edmonton).



Figure 5: Mountain Park Library in 1919 (Heritage Library, Edmonton).



All those interviewed without exception talked about the significance of the mine whistle as an important part of the local environment which communicated information about emergencies, shifts, and time. The mine whistle was well documented in the archival materials as part of the climate of the Coal Branch towns and was included in this study in the sense that useful communication and acquisition of knowledge occurred through this medium. The daily hroutine of the citizens of the towns was regulated to a certain extent by the mine whistle which sounded the fire alarm, alerted citizens to an emergency like someone lost, a train wreck, an explosion in the mine (Edson--75 Years), or the indication of work or no work the next day. An article found in the archives entitled "Whistle Talk" (Anonymous) goes as follows:

Who can ever forget the gut-tightening feeling of waking in the night to the sound of the whistle sounding the alarm. Since phones were few, the whistle was the main method of communication. In addition to its function in spreading the alarm during fires or disasters, it was blown usually about an hour and a half before each shift was due to commence. One blast meant work as usual. Three blasts meant the mine was idle--no work. By mutual agreement, anytime someone lost their life as a result of a mine accident, work was suspended for the balance of the day. In some cases where an injured workman was carried out in critical condition, his fate was generally unknown until the afternoon shift whistle. One blast meant work was usual and indicated he was still battling for life. Three, on the other hand, meant he had succumbed to his injuries. You had to experience such a situation, where all conversation stopped and in some instances breathing stopped, waiting, waiting, to see if the whistle was going to blow more than once. The sighs of relief when it didn't. I remember.

Many would question whether the environment has a place in a study on adult learning. Well-known adult educator Cyril Houle (1972) supported this type of learning and commented that adult education is often "complexly related to the

achievement of purposes which are different from learning or teaching" (p. 29). The environment appears to be closely related to education but essentially very different from it.

Summary

In this chapter I presented the findings under the broad themes of formal adult education and use of mass media in adult learning in the Coal Branch. For ease of reading, the findings in the third and largest theme of interactive life experiences is carried on in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Presentation of Findings

This chapter continues the presentation of the findings under the broad theme of interactive life experiences. The data from the section on groups and organizations was so large that it has been further broken down according to the function of the group.

Interactive Life Experiences

Resident Experts

In the small communities of the Coal Branch, an individual's circle of friends and acquaintances would without doubt have included experts in various vocations, trades, crafts, and hobbies. In this study, experts refers to those who had previous specialized training or education in specific areas. My research suggests that these experts offered information and advice quite readily and thus were highly conducive to adult learning. Former schoolteacher and longtime Cadomin resident Anne Gerlitz described one Cadomin mine superintendent as follows:

Mr. McMillan was our 'Minister of Culture.' He was a born leader and responsible for a lot of the informal learning. He was trained in Scotland, an excellent musician, a poet, a playwright. He promoted sports but especially music. He had a choral group and a dance band of very fine calibre.

Ross (1974) described McMillan as an "accomplished musician and solo violinist" (p. 75) who fostered and conducted a 25-piece symphony orchestra and was considered one of the outstanding violinists of Western Canada. An indication of the influence the man had is evidenced in the following observation: "When McMillan called an orchestra practice you attended. There was no question. The miner informed his shift

boss and went off to practice" (p. 240). Mrs. Gerlitz also named another prominent musician, Sandy Nichol, who served as conductor of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra for a time.

Another resident and expert pianist was Wildred Edwards, who composed and arranged music pieces such as "Stand Canadians" which sold throughout Canada along with other of his pieces (Ross, 1974). Another resident, Mrs. Fred Faulkner, was "a finished artist in elocution and deserved the ovation she received for her reading" (Signal, August 21, 1930). Luscar's Rhys Thomas received his Associate of Toronto College Music degree (1931) with honors and received his Licentiate of the Royal College of Music, London, England. On this achievement the Signal wrote: "He is well-known in music circles in Edmonton and the Coal Branch and has decided to devote his time to teaching music." From the talent and leadership ability of another prominent Luscar musician, Mr. Weale, "came the Luscar Silver Band which became very famous in the Alberta area, playing in the Calgary Stampede in 1928 and 1929, and entering in the Edmonton Exhibition, winning first prize for both years" (Jackson, 1978, p. 10). Hammett in a taped interview (1967) stated that "A great deal depended on leadership, on the talented men and women." This is corroborated in Edson--75 Years when the writer said about the Coal Branch, "Many early residents were trained musicians able to organize concerts, recitals, contatas, operattas, and festivals" (p. 25). Hammett gave the example of two renowned pianists in Foothills, as well as a trained solist from Glasgow and a woman comedian, all who had capabilities to organize first rate concerts and other functions.

Highly-trained engineers, geologists, and mining technologists were employed by the mining companies in the Coal Branch. Dr. McKenzie (1980) in his article "Doctor in the Coal Branch" stated that "The contract miners were considered the elite of the mining force and had to be highly experienced and skilled" (p. 4). Some were expert mine workers knowledgeable in their field simply through years of experience as illustrated in the following:

My dad started in the mines at age 12 in Scotland and worked for 59 years so I guess you could call him a bit of an expert. He would take young fellas on a shift and teach them about mining, and about safety. You had to know this and be very careful because the mine was full of gas and you had to keep cribbing it up so it wouldn't cave in on you. He taught this way for years--probably hundreds of men. (former miner Jack Chesney).

In Luscar Come Back (1978), Jackson wrote, "After living on mine rescue cars for many years and going to many towns teaching mine rescue and first aid to the men, Archie Mitchell finally settled in Luscar with a job as fire boss" (p. 6). In the Coal Branch, there were several underground miners who had had teacher training in their country of origin and who because of the language barrier, could not find work in their field. My father, a former University professor from Warsaw, was one such person. These people undoubtedly influenced whomever they came in contact with.

In health matters the local doctor was the resident expert and responsible for everything related to the well being of the population. He was hired by the company and required to attend union meetings (Roome, taped interview, 1967). It was here that he could inform the miners about any safety or health measures. He would let them know of any health concerns so they could pass it on to their families. Focus group

participant Gloria Dagil recalled Dr. Melling advising union members that riding bicycles was not a wise thing at this altitude because it put too much pressure on the heart; on another occasion he advised that children not be allowed to walk in the cold mountain creeks as it could cause fever.

There were experts in the field of sports as well. In the January 10, 1952, issue of the Signal we read "The people of Luscar are full of pride at the success of their talented daughter Noelle McVey who rang up a score of 85.5 out of 100 to put her in second place in the Ladies Western Canada Figure Skating Championships." Jack Roome (taped interview, 1967) stated, "There were professional hockey players," and Jackson noted that Luscar hockey star Millan Marcetta was soon to be with the Western Hockey League (WHL) and Minnesota's National Hockey League (NHL) team. These experts were often the result of coaching and training they had received by other local persons knowledgeable in the field.

Ross (1974) described an expert of another kind:

The house has lovely hand embroidered curtains made during the long evenings at Sterco. Mrs. Nielsen who obtained her handicraft knowledge at three centres of learning in Denmark may be working on her Cluny Lace, an art that is virtually non-existent in Canada. (p. 221)

Mrs. Nielsen as quoted in Ross's book related the following:

The Edmonton Rehabilitation Society came to ask me if I would take the Weaving Department for six weeks as the lady they had wanted six weeks off. I stayed for 15 years--and designed the Alberta Tartan. (p. 220)

The design was subsequently adopted as the official Alberta Plaid in March, 1961.

Visitors

Visitors to the area offered their knowledge and expertise as well. The work done by Father Louis Culerier, O.M.I., is well documented in both his own huge ledgers of personal writings and in other articles. Maurice Legris, professor of English at the University of Alberta in his article "Saint of the Coal Branch" (Alberta History, n.d.) praised the work of Father Louis: "His name will someday be alongside Father Lacombe." Legris described a teaching technique employed by Father Louis whereby he used a roller blind with drawings to accompany his lessons. Father Louis' personal journals record his care of the Coal Branch from 1914 to 1931 and his work in administering to the people preaching the word of God in tents, houses, and bunkhouses. He walked into the Coal Branch carrying his suitcase on his back, stopping to baptize, say mass, or simply visit.

Another "visitor" who became a household word in the Coal Branch was former Alberta Coordinator of Culture Walter Kaasa who for several years (1950s) came in to instruct figure skating and choreography for the ice carnivals. I was, in fact, one of his students. He would meet with the carnival committee to help organize the lavish productions and it was not uncommon for a crowd of onlookers to gather at the arena for the instructional sessions.

"Another interesting part of life were the itinerant pedlars such as The Watkins dealer, the Fuller Brush dealer, and the Encyclopedia salesman who would come in by train, always full of news and stories" (Vivian Melnyk). Everything from "suits to stocks" was sold in this way and one focus group participant confided that he still has

the stocks he bought back then. Former Mercoal resident Ernie Foss remembered travelling shows featuring magicians, stunt artists, comedians, and hypnotists.

Political speakers were frequent guests in the Coal Branch. At a Liberal rally in Mountain Park in 1917, Honorable C. W. Cross, J. W. Adair, M. A. McKinnon, and S. G. Bowden addressed 300 people (Signal, January 15, 1930). At a later date, "Mr. Thompson, prospective Liberal candidate, gave an informational talk which was well-received" (July 10, 1930). A 1937 political rally saw a Mr. McPherson of Edmonton address the audience on "Conditions in Spain." Speakers from Edmonton were part of the 1937 May Day celebrations in Mountain Park.

It appeared that public lectures were periodically given. The Signal reported, "Some outside speakers will be present in Cadomin on Saturday" and a note in the March 14, 1940, issue reported, "Mrs. C. Lorge of Vancouver addressed a large audience in Cadomin recently on Technocracy. She was assisted by three other speakers." The November 6, 1952, Signal report from Coal Valley states that Mr. J. McKenzie of CJCA radio gave an address on "Publicity and how to achieve it in a Proper Manner." Hammett (taped interview, 1967) noted that some travelling missionaries passed through the area, having a good stock of reading matter which they shared with local citizens.

Friends and Associates

Repeatedly, the data from the focus group and individual interviews revealed that "Everyone helped everyone else." From shared experiences with respected friends and associates, people could gain insights and improve understandings. Many such

learning activities would occur through interaction in community organizations, an aspect discussed later in the presentation of data. Experiential and interactive learning was evidenced in some of the stories told in the focus group and interviews: The immigrants (men) "picked up their English in the mine. They had to learn it. It was a matter of necessity. And they did learn" (Jack Chesney). The women, too, learned by necessity as colorfully related by Gloria Dagil and Mary Liviero:

Our kitchen was always full of women (immigrants) doing crochet or baking donuts. I can remember Mrs. R. and my mother sitting there crocheting beautiful patterns. They didn't have the technical terms or even the English terms but they learned by doing it over and over. Or Mom would go over and watch Mrs. R. make her favorite donuts and then come home and make them herself. They had to learn everything--Fahrenheit, pounds, ounces, customs, plus adjust to the weather and how to get along with other nationalities. This was all new to them. The price of groceries at the company store was very high so the women would band together and form Coops to order groceries monthly from the Alberta Trading Company for much cheaper. These women could barely communicate yet they learned quickly enough how to survive.

They also learned from their children, who picked up the language quickly at school.

Tutors and interpreters formed part of the learning mosaic as well. Jackson (1978) related, "Bessy Moran was helping some of the local men improve their English and Math at night classes and most of them were from different countries" (p. 27). One group participant reported: "We had Mr. Clements in Cadomin--he helped everyone with mathematics." I am aware from personal communication with former Cadomin resident and committee member George Ford that he tutored for mine courses. He also indicated that miners had to memorize the Mines Act. Focus group participant Gloria Dagil added that Sylvio Tono of Mountain Park wrote letters home

to Italy for people and a fellow by the name of Hewitt would do income tax for his immigrant friends. Italian Joe Cicarelli acted as interpreter at union functions. My father, Karl Berendt, translated and wrote letters for friends and acquaintances in any one of the seven languages he spoke. Newcomers to Luscar would ask for 'Charlie' to translate or write something for them." On one occasion he was asked by management to sit in on a meeting as an interpreter for a Communist speaker who delivered his talk in Russian. In his article "Doctor in the Coal Branch," Dr. McKenzie (1985) related the following: "The bookkeeper in Coal Valley was French Canadian but spoke Parisian French, and I learned a lot of conversational French from him."

Story after story was told which illustrated the necessity of learning for survival and the willingness of people helping other people to learn. Focus group participant Jack Chesney related a particularly interesting incident involving a fellow worker who

wanted to get away from shovelling coal and become part of the engineering group. But he had no schooling. So a bunch of us guys taught him 'one plus one is two' and before you knew it he was doing trigonometry. He wrote his exams for his ticket, and by golly, he got it.

And interviewee Anne Gerlitz contributed the following observation:

People simply had to work things out. I can remember one incident where two fellas were trying to work out some mathematical problem outside the mine and were doing their figuring, without success, with chalk on the timbers. A Russian fellow watched quietly from a distance and after the two left, he picked up the chalk, walked over to the problem, and wrote down the right answer.

Interaction was a major means of acquiring what needed to be learned, and

combined with the person's own ingenuity much could be accomplished. Anne Gerlitz told of a Ukrainian lady who went to the store for barley, not knowing the word for barley. The store clerk finally "got it" and told her the word. She was observed saying "Barley, barley, barley" all the way home.

Several references were made to "Smokers," an interesting mining social phenomena. A Smoker was a social gathering on Saturday night highlighted by storytelling and yarn-swapping accompanied by many kegs of beer followed by a fine lunch (Ross, 1974, p. 201). The stories often revolved around sights and adventures in the surrounding wilderness. Jack Roome (taped interview, 1967) related tips on how to track and hunt grizzlies through his experience of killing six of them over the years. No doubt much embellishment took place, but certainly some incidental learning was acquired from this entirely social and enjoyable activity.

Groups

In response to the question what groups or organizations existed there was unanimous agreement in the focus group that the people of the Coal Branch lacked for nothing. " We had it all--sports, libraries, churches, clubs, you could go on and on." The following is a brief presentation of the vast amount of data that were relevant to the category of groups. I have organized the groups and organizations according to the function they served.

Political and Patriotic. There appeared to be a fair amount of healthy political activity in the Coal Branch (union official Alex Murray, taped interview, 1967) with management generally being Liberal or Conservative, and the men a political mix.

Cadomin had "a staunch Social Credit group" (Ross, 1974, p. 115) and an active Labor Party following (George Ford). Focus group participant Mary Carey recalled that "In Mountain Park the LPP (actually a reformed Communist party) was quite active, and quite 'pink' actually." I also found references in my research to a Cross Club in Mountain Park (den Otter) but it is not clear what this group did. It may have been a political group who supported Liberal candidate C. W. Cross in 1913. The Western Leader of April 14, 1917, mentioned a Women's Liberal Club in Mountain Park. These groups would have provided opportunities for some incidental learning as people got together for discussions and meetings.

Another active patriotic group was Cadets and people recalled the "great leaders we had, like Paul Marshall. We had uniforms and parades--big parades." In addition, Ross (1974) mentioned the Luscar War Service Department and the Mountain Park Cooperative Society (1916). Mercoal had an active Canadian Daughters organization which reached a membership of 17 (Signal, June 12, 1952). The Canadian Daughters was one of the more active women's groups in the Coal Branch. "I remember their conferences, one in Mercoal and one in Cadomin" (Vivian Melnyk). Another group, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.) was a more education-focused group and supported educational activities in the communities.

Religious. As in every community, religious groups were active and in the case of the Coal Branch, the three denominations represented were the Anglican, Methodist (later United), and Roman Catholic. Church archival records date the first Methodist church in 1917 followed by Catholic and Anglican churches in 1924. There was a

variety of church activities through which people of the Coal Branch learned including Sunday school (religious education); youth activities, the Sunday sermon; Bible Study groups; committee work on particular aspects of church life; pastoral counselling; groups concerned with personal or family problems; musical and other cultural activities; summer school programs; charitable projects; and community social action. Former Mountain Park residents Mike Pavich and Gloria Dagil recalled catechism and Sunday School classes that were taught by the Sisters of Service Nuns and that both Anglican and Catholics took this instruction. One person with whom I spoke casually mentioned she had learned spinning from one of the church groups. The United Church held mid-week adult Bible Study classes and also had a Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) group popular with girls from all denominations. Photographs in Luscar Come Back(1978) show the United Church's Ladies Aid group of 9 members and a Ladies Auxiliary (presumably Anglican) of 17. One focus group participant and one of the last surviving members of the Luscar United Church Ladies Aid, Elsa Berendt, verified that the group was a very active one. Archival photographs showed a 1951 United Church Sunday School class with teacher. The January 26, 1947, minutes of the Cadomin United Church Pastoral Charge reported 10 teachers and 89 Sunday School students, a Ladies Aid Group, Canadian Girls in Training, as well as a weekly adult study group in that community. It was mentioned that the Trail Rangers took up collection and I assumed this was a church-sponsored youth group. The Anglican Women's Auxiliary was an active group as well. Mountain Park resident Mary Liviero indicated that the Catholics had the Legion of Mary for young girls and pointed out

that each congregation supported the other. Focus group participant Agnes Brennan contributed that "Religion wasn't a barrier. I didn't realize till we moved to Edmonton that it made any difference what religion you were." Through their churches, the preachers had regular communication with the outside and were in a unique position to "bring in" news. However, between shift work and union meetings scheduled for Sunday mornings, it was difficult for the miners to get to church. Hammett (taped interview, 1967) noted, however, that "The church was always there making a contribution to community and spiritual life." He cited an early Methodist preacher by the name of McNeil who "was fearless, going into the bunkhouses to tell the men about God." Similar accounts were told of Father Louis (see section on visitors). While it is true that much of the learning provided by the religious institutions was sectarian, much of it was not, as the above activities suggested; and although their actual memberships were not great, their influence was widely felt in the Coal Branch.

Health. An entry in the January 30, 1930, Signal announced the formation of the Cadomin Medical Board with Dr. McKenzie, local physician and surgeon, addressing the meeting. Some years later in 1939, the Signal reported the formation of the Women's Recreation and Health League in Cadomin with 60 members signed up. The league was formed under the Dominion-Provincial Training Program. The October 26, 1939, issue reported the formation of the Mountain Park Red Cross society, and the March 14, 1940 issue of the Leader carried an article on the activities of the Red Cross Society in Cadomin carrying on active wartime work. Focus group data confirmed that the Red Cross Societies' activities in the Coal Branch

involved projects such as knitting socks and afghans, and that proceeds from fund-raising activities in the community usually went to the Red Cross during the war.

Athletic. Sports was big in all the communities of the Coal Branch and competition was keen among the towns. Only a summary of the extensive data on sports is given here. A comprehensive list of the athletic clubs can be found in Appendix E. When asked about athletic opportunities, the participants discussed activities such as fitness classes, badminton, baseball, billiards, curling, football, hockey, rugby, soccer, and tennis. The 1928 Western Signal reported that tennis courts were maintained by the tennis clubs at Cadomin, Coalspur, Luscar, and Mountain Park. The president of the Cadomin Athletic Club, Nick Melnyk (personal notes, April 29, 1947) noted that the Sports and Amusement Association sponsored the skating and curling clubs, senior and midget hockey clubs, physical training classes, and the playground committee. Evidence of the success of some of these organizations is obvious in the following:

There was a fantastic aerobics class in Cadomin. It was taught by Frank Arth who got his training in Germany. He taught all of us. He actually bought equipment for his classes. He was an excellent teacher. When I moved to Mercoal there wasn't much to do, so I went to the Legion and asked if they would buy the equipment and I would teach aerobics there. So they did. We had spring boards, parallel bars, all the equipment....two nights a week. (Jack Chesney)

In Luscar a fitness class, as told by focus group participant Peggy Mitchell, was run by "Someone who came up from Cadomin and taught it every Monday in the community hall." Local pianists would accompany the aerobics activities on the piano.

The Western Signal, September 7, 1950, in a feature story on the Coal Branch wrote:

There now began an era in sports that is unrivalled by many a major sports area in Canada. By 1928 Mountain Park had developed a baseball team that won the Western Canada Senior Baseball Championship. From this time to 1942 some of the finest hockey in the country was seen in this part of the country. In 1936, the Luscar Indians won the senior provincial hockey championship in Calgary (March 12, Signal). The May 20, 1927, Signal reports a local amateur boxing contest and during the event the crowd was entertained by the 'Yodelling Miner', a harmonica artist, and accordion numbers.

Among the many other athletic activities cited were the formation of a soccer team in Luscar in the early 1930s, shooting practice for women in the arena during the summers, and a "winning" ladies hockey team in 1931 in Luscar (Jackson, 1978).

Ladies broomball was also popular. The highlight of the year was Sportsday in the summer. Each town had its own and invited the other towns. All year people looked forward to this day of parades, competitions, exhibitions, entertainment, tournaments, and a dance. All organizations and many individuals cooperated to stage this event.

Unsurpassed were the ice-carnivals which were organized by the teachers and the parents and usually chaired by a mine official. One year the opera Carmen was performed on ice in Mountain Park, followed in Luscar by such classics as The Wedding of the Painted Doll and Hansel and Gretel. The carnivals played to full seating capacities of 1200 for three nights and were then taken to other locales. Aside from the skills involved for those participating in athletic events, there was a tremendous amount of secondary or incidental learning occurring as people worked together, gathered information, and organized these well-conducted activities.

Music and Arts. The data suggested that music provided almost unlimited opportunities for adult learning and participation in the Coal Branch. There were several bands and orchestras. Cadomin was noted for having the only symphony orchestra between Edmonton and Vancouver (Ross, 1974, p. 72) and there were good crowds at the concerts, as the ticket money was collected through the payroll. The August 21, 1930, Signal described a Cadomin Symphony Concert giving an excellent interpretation of the overture from the musical opera The Desert Song. The Cadomin Symphony Orchestra was the proud owner of a grand piano (Ross, 1974, p. 81). Ross reported in 1931 the Luscar Orchestra presented a concert with selections from The Messiah, overture to Oberon and No, No, Nanette. Cadomin also had a brass band as did most of the other towns. The Signal (1929) reported the Luscar Collieries Silver Band topped all provincial bands in an Edmonton Exhibition competition as well as solo saxophone honors by B. Roberts. Hughes (1993) talked about Luscar's 5-piece dance orchestra and the Welsh 20-piece brass band while Jackson's (1978) book contained a photograph of the band. Choirs such as the Luscar Welsh Choir (Dennis Ferguson, Parklander staff reporter) often accompanied the symphony performances. Jackson (1978) wrote that the Luscar Ladies Choir "would have been the envy of any town" (p. 68). Also to be heard particularly in parades in the communities was the Yugoslavian String Orchestra (Signal, May 20, 1937).

Dramatic societies worked hand in hand with the music groups. The Signal reported the activities of the Sterco Dramatic Society in 1931. Plays such as Harlem Tragedy were performed by an active group in Foothills (Hammett, taped interview,

1967) and Mountain Park "always had a band and wonderful concerts and drama festivals usually organized by the teachers" (Mary L.).

Community. A great deal of education and learning in a broad sense took place in community organizations of the Coal Branch. Some were highly organized and some were hardly organized at all. The groups having a more tightly controlled membership are discussed in a separate category below whereas the community groups were open to all. Much of the teaching or leading was done by volunteers and the learning was unintentional, that is, the participants were not conscious that they were learning. Most of the towns in the Coal Branch had a Social Club whose function was to provide wholesome entertainment and improve the community. Maydonik (1985) recorded that social clubs provided libraries and newspapers. Every miner was required to pay into the Club and all funds were put into community improvement. All the towns had excellent community halls and theatres (Anne) which enhanced the motivation to make use of the facilities.

Women's Institutes have a long history of educational contributions for women and the women of Mountain Park and those in other Coal Branch communities benefitted from this organization. From my own experience of ten years as a member of the Women's Institute in the 1960s and 70s I am aware that members acquired important knowledge and skills relating to law, politics, household management, and community building. Women's Institutes were geared to educational action-oriented activities and towards problem solving. Weekly half-hour radio broadcasts provided news from other institutes. On one occasion the Mountain Park Women's Institute

offered a 3-day workshop on interior decorating (Signal, November 20, 1930).

Other organizations (not necessarily for adults but involved adults as leaders) active in the Coal Branch were Brownies, Guides, Cubs, and Boy Scouts. And, of course, every town had its voluntary fire brigade. The Lovett Fire Brigade in 1913 is pictured in a photograph in the Provincial Archives. Home and School Associations were organized in Mercoal and Robb (Signal, June 31, 1952). The Coal Branch Highway Committee was active for many years and records show a meeting with members of the provincial cabinet and highways committee in 1928 (Edson--75 Years). The February 20, 1930 Signal reported the formation of the Cadomin Board of Trade. Their meeting was held in the community hall's "beautifully-furnished club room." There was also an Optimist's Club.

Fraternal. Fraternal organizations provided opportunities for adult learning as well and interacted closely with other community organizations. Some of the Mercoal groups as cited by former resident Ernie Foss included the B.P.O.E (Elks), the Royal Purple, the Masons and their sister lodge The Ladies of the Eastern Star, and the Canadian Legion. All groups were very active in the community, the Legion in particular, supplying sports equipment and sponsoring activities. Branches of the Canadian Legion and Ladies Auxiliary to the Canadian Legion were active in Cadomin, Lovett, Mercoal, and Coal Valley (Ross, 1974). The Ladies Auxiliary to the Legion organized craft and bake sales, card parties, and other social functions. All the funds went back into improving the community. The Masons were formed in 1922 in Cadomin (Ross, 1974). A photograph in the Provincial Archives showed approximately

60 members in the B.P.O.E. Elks Club in Mercoal. The Signal reported 91 members initiated into the Mercoal Lodge of the B.P.O.E. The Elks Lodge with its purpose to improve community life was formed in Cadomin on January, 1930, with 30 members initiated (Signal, August 21, 1930). By 1936 the membership had grown to 60 members. With membership of this size, good leadership and organizational skills were important, and the work done by these groups was undoubtedly significant.

The Luscar minute book of the Rebekah Lodge #102 (I.O.O.F.) meeting of March 13, 1926, listed 25 members on the roll. It appeared that parliamentary procedure was strictly adhered to with committees for finance, property, entertainment, and widows/orphans fund. Socials and suppers were used for fund-raising and part of the proceeds went to the Education Foundations Fund which provided financial assistance to young people who wished to further their education and to adults who wished to take courses or attend seminars or conferences. Speakers and guests were invited and delegates attended the Grand Lodge Session in Calgary. Members followed a program of "degrees" which they worked for and earned through study. The Mountain Park Lodge formed on March 20, 1920, and the Cadomin Lodge on April 2, 1928. From the minute book of the Oddfellows Lodge, the brother lodge to the Rebekahs, we find 15 members in Mountain Park. One event recorded was a community picnic for over 500 children and 600 adults sponsored by the Oddfellows Lodges. All the organizations mentioned contributed to adult learning, if in no other way, simply as a consequence of association with people of similar interests and values.

Figure 6: Large membership of Mercoal Elks Club in 1940 (courtesy of Heritage Library, Edmonton).



Figure 7: Miners at work in Coalspur mine (Heritage Library).



Cultural and Leisure. The immigrants added a flavor of their own. In the September 14, 1946 issue, the Signal reported that the Croatian Society held a successful picnic on August 25 with guests from Mountain Park and Cadomin so it is assumed the society was also in Luscar. Proceeds of the event would go towards building an orphan's home in Yugoslavia. Ross (1974) referred to the Canadian League of Croatians in Mercoal as well as to the Association of United Ukrainians in 1941. The focus group data indicated that the Croatian Society in Mountain Park as well as Mercoal's League of Croatians "always put on a barbeque--a lamb or maybe two. It was a social gathering usually on a Sunday afternoon, not just for themselves, for everyone. The women baked the bread to go with it and the men barbequed." The Ukrainians also had groups in Mountain Park and Luscar while the Italians had bocci (a game somewhat resembling bowling played on a field) which was immensely popular with all nationalities. Alex Murray (taped interview, 1967) saw the Coal Branch as

a very cosmopolitan population that should have had racial conflict, but there was very little of it. I never heard anyone say, 'I won't work next to him because he's Hungarian.' We depended on each other for our lives in the mine and would go out of our way to make sure of each other's safety.

Other groups which contributed to the general well being of the people of the Coal Branch included the extremely well organized Bridge Clubs with their prizes, luncheons, tournaments, trophies, and even dances as part of club activities. The 100-member Mountain Park Fish and Game Association (Signal, June 3, 1930) was a protective league whose members among other activities restocked lakes and showed

wildlife films in the theatre. Hobby clubs were usually based on need and included such activities as fishing, hunting, trapping, vegetable gardening, and even raising chickens (Hughes, 1993). A photograph taken in 1931 showed the Cadomin-Mountain Park Hiking Club and Ross (1974) mentioned a Ham Radio Club.

The activities of the various groups usually took place in the community halls. The Signal of October 15, 1936 says, "The Luscar Hall offers the finest theatre and dancehall combination west of Edmonton." Den Otter (1967) remarked that "The Coal Valley Hall had an auditorium, reading room, library, writing facilities, radio, and athletic equipment." Maydonik (1985) stated that the halls were rented by clergymen, politicians, labor leaders, performers, and cinema operators and were used for amateur concerts and variety shows.

Summary

The research data clearly indicated a diverse and high level of adult activity in the Coal Branch and for the most part, archival data supported the oral evidence. More formal activities included night school, correspondence courses, job-related training, discussion groups with an educational focus, and the availability of private lessons or instruction. Opportunities for learning existed in the mass media as well and indications are that printed materials in the form of books, magazines and newspapers were readily available. Libraries were well-stocked and well-used. Radio was a critical element in providing knowledge; film played a lesser role. By far the largest area of learning activity took place in the form of interactive life experience situations as evidenced in the large numbers of gifted individuals who as leaders in the community

provided opportunities for people to participate; and in the large number of community-type groups encompassing politics, religion, health, athletics, arts, culture, and service clubs.

This chapter has presented the findings of the focus group, the personal interviews, and the archival documentation under the theme of interactive life experiences. In the next chapter I present a summary of the research and offer reflections and recommendations for possibilities for further study.

Chapter 6 Discussion of Results

Introduction

In this final chapter, I summarize the design of the study in terms of its purpose and research methodology and reflections of the experience. I then present a summary followed by an interpretation of the findings. Finally, I offer recommendations for possible future research and some conclusions.

Summary of the Study

For the purpose of the study, **adult learning was considered in a very broad sense to include any process and activity which "helped men and women improve themselves or their society by increasing their skill, knowledge, or sensitivities" (Houle, 1972).** The intent of this study has been to identify the adult learning activities and opportunities in the Alberta Coal Branch during its existence from 1911 to 1958. The questions posed in the study were:

- (1) What was the nature of adult learning in the Coal Branch?
- (2) Who and what were the providers of the adult learning activities?

To collect data relevant to the questions, a focus group interview and two semi-structured interviews were conducted. In addition, archival documentation was gathered and included old newspapers, photographs, government reports, two theses written on the Coal Branch, personal notes of former residents, several articles, and previously taped interviews with former residents; historical data from secondary sources, personal communications, and personal knowledge. The data were presented in narrative structure. Three unifying themes of (1) formal adult education, (2) use of

mass media, and (3) interactive life experiences were used to organize findings.

Findings

A considerable amount of adult learning was being carried out in the Coal Branch (though it may not have been called by that name) including such diverse resources and providers as the labor union, voluntary organizations, churches, libraries, and the mass media. Over eighty different organizations and groups were named and categorized under the three broad themes.

Four sources operative in the Coal Branch which recognized education as primary functions were the Department of Extension, the International Correspondence School, Alberta Correspondence Schools, and organized discussion groups. Night school, as it was termed at that time, and correspondence courses were available. Formal classes and programs reached only a few, a substantial number of whom were men, as the courses were often job-related. The union undertook training programs and educated the workers in safety procedures. Parliamentary procedure and collective bargaining would have been a secondary learning activity. A considerable amount of learning was accomplished through informal talks used as members of discussion groups presented talks on subjects that were of interest to the group. Although the audience for this type of learning was small, the search for knowledge was no doubt carried forward through this medium. Private lessons were not a predominant form of learning.

Individual use of mass media such as newspapers added considerably to the learning climate of the Coal Branch. The study revealed a substantial use of libraries.

A number of groups used books in their regular meetings. Often the Bible was used. Members of lodges had to use books frequently for memorization of ritualistic material as well as for study purposes. Miners had to study and know the Mines Act.

Often organizations made use of newspapers. Frequent mention has been made to the Edson Leader and the Edson-Jasper Signal in this study. These local newspapers were in their own way an educational influence in the Coal Branch, giving strong support to educational and cultural activities. They often contained reviews of books and encouraged subscribers to read them. They also provided material about art, music, literature, and other special interest material. The reader could get a great deal of useful information about a wide variety of subjects from the newspapers. Radio played an important role in the incidental acquisition of the English language by immigrants. Film was used in a variety of subjects covering such fields as sports and wildlife; however, it was difficult to determine the extent to which film went beyond the purpose of entertainment. Whereas live theatre produced many opportunities to increase knowledge, film did not appear to provide an extensive educational service for adult learning in the Coal Branch. However, the use of all forms of mass media combined to give further opportunity for learning. Mass media reached into everyone's life and the home itself became a learning environment where books, radio, etc. contributed to the daily job of increasing knowledge.

The configuration that touched most people and constituted the single most widely used source of learning in the Coal Branch was knowledgeable people, or experts, whose contribution to leadership in various activities was substantial and well

supported. Semi-professionals (especially in sports and music) were lured in by the mining companies and the result was that the communities benefitted by their expertise and sharing of knowledge. Friends, associates, and family members were also among those "knowledgeable" people whose interest and leadership resulted in organized clubs or groups; and while formal programs affected only a few people, cultural, community, and entertainment agencies in one form or another and a vast array of voluntary associations affected many individuals. I am reminded of the historian Bernard Bailyn's (1960) comment made in the literature review that there would be little to see if we were looking only for formal education.

A substantial amount of adult learning was carried out by community organizations. The major aim seemed to be community improvement, a term synonymous with adult education, and which came about as a result of combined individual effort and improvement.

As discussed in the literature review section, voluntary associations such as the many groups and organizations which existed in the Coal Branch have broad educational aims, providing learning through interaction (see p. 25 of this study). Groups performed volunteer services, promoted community projects, presented programs and workshops, and ran demonstrations. A variety of community organizations both formal and informal carried out forms of adult learning in their regular activities and programs. Many organizations were part of a provincial, national, or international scheme while there were some which were peculiar to the Coal Branch and had no outside ties. They originated to fill some particular need or interest of the

local residents. Affiliated organizations had programs imposed or directed according to the constitution of the outside parent organization. Focus groups developed skills, cooperation with others, and encouraged creative expression. Community agencies and churches provided learning opportunities as well. The interview data in particular emphasized experiential learning through people helping each other, and what was more, "the learning was enjoyable." All individual and organization activities described were involved in adult learning in varying ways and degrees.

Reflections on the Methodology

The respondents in the focus group and interviews were extremely willing and enthusiastic to share their experiences of learning and were anxious to have the story of the Coal Branch told. I could easily have conducted two or three other focus groups with people equally as willing to contribute to the study. Unfortunately, I did not have the time needed to talk to the many people who would have been interested. Certainly there is still a vast amount of untapped treasure in the form of people's personal memorabilia such as photo albums and scrapbooks. Unless the individuals are personally approached, this information may remain spread all over the continent. Happily, more people are turning their collections over to historical societies. However, I do feel that what the individuals in the interviews had to say was representative of the Coal Branch.

I could also have spent more time going through newspaper articles at the archives, but I found that after about 1940, most activities were established and the information was becoming repetitive. It appeared that after the road came through in

the 1940s there was a general decline by the populace in enthusiasm for some of the activities. I found, too, that the Edson newspapers were very kindly disposed to the Coal Branch and presented a very positive picture.

As a result of my research I became acutely aware that my interpretation of the historical data depended entirely on my own philosophy of adult education and that another person's perspective of adult learning in the Coal Branch could be very different.

Reflections on the Findings

In qualitative research, interpretation is inevitable. According to Patton (1990) interpretation means

attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases, and data irregularities as part of testing the viability of an interpretation (p. 423).

What follows are my interpretations based on the data which I examined.

Throughout the study I have been impressed with what I found about adult learning in the Coal Branch. I have been impressed with the genuine love and enthusiasm shown by the former residents for this area. The Coal Branch seems to have a sacredness about it and the story of its development is an amazing one. It was a place where people could have gone wild, with no restrictions or regard for order because of its remoteness. Instead, it was a story of people attempting a better life for themselves and their community in the isolation of a mining town. Isolation forced people to use their ingenuity but it also made them realize their need for other people

and they learned to get along with one another. Gathering together in clubs and groups seemed to play a valuable role in building unity. It seems to me that the Coal Branch is an example of enlightenment brought to one of Alberta's "little places." The secret seemed to be that adult learning opportunities developed to meet a need and were not bound to restrictions regarding membership.

The Coal Branch contained ethnic groups who had some education and recognized the importance of educational, social, and cultural activities. They brought together their resources and applied them to improve the quality of life. Whatever minor grievances that occurred from time to time between nationalities appeared to be individual and not group-type problems and it was obvious that people learned to live together in harmony. As former Mountain Park schoolteacher Kay Farnham put it, "It was multi-culturalism at its best." It was in the day-to-day confrontation with their conditions that the immigrants gained their education. They learned to adapt to their environment and from their experiences came a strength, ideas and attitudes which formed the basis of a distinct Coal Branch consciousness which remains today. The ethnic activities were often more social than educational; however, the social and personal adjustment of the immigrant to life in the Coal Branch and in Canada was a learning process, but it was slow and very much an integral part of everyday experiences. The essential survival skills could not be taught in the sense of formal education, yet knowledge of issues necessary to citizenship had to be learned in order to function in a strange land. In the Coal Branch, no government-sponsored language or citizenship classes were available as they are today and much of the work of

acquiring the language was left to incidental learning and the effort of the people themselves.

My research suggested that adult education in the academic sense was a by-product; yet, it is clear that the Coal Branch was a literate, active society. Learning was a constant process and an unnoticed one. Much of the learning was secondary, that is, it came through such resources as families, churches, clubs, the union, and libraries. Primary education seemed to be at the worksite or related to the job. Night school and correspondence, though readily available, were not a predominant form of the learning; however, their availability gave opportunity for adult residents to increase their education and to improve themselves on a civic, job, and personal level. Through secondary learning and their own ingenuity the citizens of the Coal Branch survived as a people and maintained a sense of human beings in the isolation of the mining camps, establishing progressive communities. And while it is relatively simple for a city to provide artistic facilities and such cultural necessities as public libraries, communities like those in the Coal Branch faced many difficulties providing similar services. They had to overcome distance, lack of roads, funding, and cultural barriers.

The mining towns of the Coal Branch did not resemble the popular conception of gambling and drinking frontier settlements but instead advanced beyond the transient disorder of a boom-and-bust mining town. The small mining camps became communities of many amenities which impacted on the nature of the adult learning.

In reflecting on the large amounts of data on music, I concluded that music filled the lives of Coal Branchers. Not only were there opportunities to listen to music

through the numerous orchestras, concerts, and theatrical performances, but dancing was also a major form of entertainment. It was a rare gathering either public or in the homes that music was not present in some form.

Was life and learning really so unique to the Coal Branch? Surely this type of social and cultural life was replicated all over the prairies. What was unique, I believe, was the successful combination of contrasting elements--a harsh, dirty occupation (mining) and a gentle lifestyle; old European enemies living side by side in peace; harsh, remote yet lacking nothing; isolated yet rich in learning.

Possibilities for Further Research

I was initially apprehensive that reference to adult education might illicit a negative response from participants in this study. In a sense it did, as several times during my communication with former residents the question was asked, "Why don't you pick something more interesting?"

An engaging research might be done on the current abandonment of public citizenship programs and how voluntary organizations and social movements are attempting to fill the gap with reduced or no funding. An additional inquiry might be whether English as a Second Language classes are necessary or can immigrants learn sufficiently well the way they did in the Coal Branch, through experience and interpersonal contact.

The anecdotes, episodes, and case studies of the past can often throw fresh light on contemporary problems or issues. The differences in types of adult education and learning undertaken by women as compared with that of men in the Coal Branch

would prove to be an interesting study.

Conclusion

Within a space of 47 years from 1911 to 1958, opportunities for adult learning flourished in the Coal Branch as individuals with the ideals of a wholesome community worked together in the concrete realization of those ideals. What characterized adult learning in the Coal Branch was adversity, gifted leadership, experiential learning, community spirit, and learning through interpersonal (social) contact. These aspects are all well-recognized features of adult learning and were exemplified in the Coal Branch.

There are many towns in Alberta that have flourished and faded, but none have reached the peak of activity or the enduring spirit found in the communities of the Coal Branch, a spirit which today draws up to 3,000 former residents and their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to reunions set in the old Cadomin townsite. Yet while there was considerable wholesome activity, it must be remembered that the beer parlours prospered, many lives were lost in mine accidents, and not everyone accessed the opportunities for bettering themselves. Sorrow was a great part of life there. However, that people were interested in bettering themselves and the quality of their lives was evident in their pursuit of job-related knowledge and in their passion to live a civilized and refined life in a raw wilderness.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form

Thesis Title: Echoes of Education: Adult Learning in the Coal Branch

Researcher: Erna Elvira Luger

University of Alberta

Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Policy Studies

This is to certify that I agree to participate in the above study. Having been contacted by the researcher, a graduate student in the Department of Adult Career and

Technology, I understand that:

1. The purpose of this study is to examine, through archival documentation and interviewing of former residents, the various formal and nonformal learning activities and opportunities that took place in the Coal Branch.
2. I have given permission for my name to be used in the resulting thesis.
3. I am participating in this study on a purely voluntary basis; therefore, I have the right to quit or refuse to participate at any time.
4. The results of the study will be made available to me if I so request.
5. I have been fully informed as to the nature of the study and my involvement in it.
6. This study will be available for examination at the University of Alberta Library.

Signature of participant _____

Date February 18, 1996 _____

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation to Focus Group

February 2, 1996

Dear (Participant),

Thank you for accepting my invitation to attend the discussion about adult learning activities in the Coal Branch. The meeting will be held on Sunday, February 18, at the following address:

Bethel Seniors Residence
7728-Whyte Avenue (82 Avenue)
Edmonton, Alberta

We will meet in the large meeting room just to your left as you enter. I would like you to be my guest for a light luncheon at noon and the discussion should last until approximately 2:15 p.m.

Ten former residents of the Coal Branch will be there from Cadomin, Luscar, Mercoal, and Mountain Park. We will be discussing, very informally, ways that people found to improve their lives through learning activities and educational opportunities while living in the Coal Branch.

If for some reason you are not able to attend, please call to let me know as soon as possible. My number is 430-1631. I will be calling once more a few days before the meeting to confirm arrangements with you. If transportation is a problem, I can arrange to pick you up.

I am very much looking forward to our time together.

Sincerely yours,

Erna Luger

Appendix C: Interview Guide Questions

The purpose of this study is to identify the kinds of activities and opportunities for adult learning that were available in the Coal Branch.

1. What type of learning did adults do?

Probe: Can you comment on night classes, for example?

Did anyone that you knew take correspondence courses?

Can you comment on workshops or conferences?

2. Where and how did people get knowledge and information?

Probe: Can you comment on libraries?

How was radio and film used?

What newspapers were available?

3. What organizations were there that would have provided the opportunity for gaining knowledge and learning?

Probe: What did the company offer in the way of training?

What role did the union play in providing training?

What activities did the church carry on for adults?

What was there for those interested in the arts?

What adult learning efforts centered around family life and community improvement?

4. How did immigrants learn the skills they needed?

Probe: How did they learn English?

Appendix D: Procedures for Conducting a Focus Group

A focus group is an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. Groups are usually 6-12 people; the interview normally lasts for 1-2 hours. A focus group interview is indeed an interview--not a discussion group, nor a decision-making group. They can be used when there is no information about a topic. By gaining information, the researcher can then develop a questionnaire. Conversely, you can use a group interview to validate information gained from other data sources, for example, a questionnaire.

Participants are typically a homogeneous group who are asked to reflect and respond to a limited number of questions. They hear each other's responses, but it is not necessary nor expected that there will be consensus. It is O.K. if there is disagreement, as long as the discussion does not become heated or adversarial. The purpose is to gather indepth data of high quality where people can interact.

The primary advantage of focus groups is that they are very efficient for "getting at" a number of people . They act as a quality control by exposing or weeding out extreme viewpoints. They tend to be highly interactive; this contributes to the support for participants and a sense of shared meaning.

The disadvantage is that they require a highly skilled interviewer or facilitator. The number of questions is limited and the depth to some questions may be limited.

Procedures for conducting a focus group are outlined below:

1. Provide refreshments.
2. Use a tape recorder and make sure it works. Have extra tapes and an extension cord.
3. Write the questions on the board or flipchart.
4. Use name cards, but only the first name.
5. The interview process should follow:
 - welcome.
 - objectives of the session.
 - introductions (what you want them to know about each other).
 - explain interview procedures.
 - ask if there are any questions about the process or purpose.

Appendix E: List of Organizations

Political and Patriotic Groups

- Sterco Veterans Volunteer Reserve
- Luscar War Veteran Service Department
- Mountain Park Reformed Communist Party
- Cadomin Social Credit Group
- Liberal Party group
- Conservative Party group
- Canadian Legion (Cadomin, Lovett, Mercoal, Coal Valley)
- Ladies Auxiliary to the Canadian Legion
- Cadets
- Mountain Park Women's Liberal Group

Religious

- United Church of Canada
 - Ladies Aid
 - C.G.I.T.
 - Explorers
 - Trail Rangers
 - Adult Bible Study classes
 - Sunday School
- Roman Catholic Church
 - Legion of Mary
 - Catechism classes
 - Catholic Women's League
- Anglican Church
 - Women's Auxiliary
 - Catechism classes
 - Sunday School

Health

- Cadomin Medical Board
- Canada Red Cross Society
- Cadomin Women's Recreational and Health League

Athletic

- Amateur hockey clubs (All towns), Ladies hockey
- Commercial hockey Clubs
- Curling Clubs (all towns)
- Baseball Clubs (all towns)
- Tennis Club
- Soccer/ Football/ Rugby Clubs
- Badminton Club
- Cross Club - men's and women's (possibly a political group)
- Boxing Club
- Hiking club
- Cadomin Gymnasium Club
- Youth Training Classes
- Aerobics Classes
- Cadomin Athletic Club

Music and Fine Arts

- Luscar Welsh Orchestra
- Luscar Collieries Silver Band
- Luscar Welsh Brass Band
- Luscar Welsh Choir
- Luscar Ladies Choir
- Cadomin Symphony Orchestra
- Cadomin Brass Band
- Yugoslavian String Orchestra
- Sterco Dramatic Society
- Ice Carnival Committee

Community Groups

- Social Clubs (all towns)
- Cadomin Board of Trade
- Mountain Park Women's Institute
- Club of Current Affairs (Cadomin)
- Optimist Club
- Coal Branch Highway Committee
- Cadomin Sports and Amusement Association
- Cubs, Scouts, Guides, Brownies
- Cooperative Associations (Mercoal, Mountain Park)
- Home and School Associations

Fraternal Groups

- Oddfellows Lodge
- Rebekahs Lodge
- B.P.O.E. Elks (Cadomin, Mercoal, Mountain Park)

O.O.R.P. Ladies of the Royal Purple
I.O.D.E. Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire
Ladies of the Eastern Star
Masonic Lodge

Cultural

Mercoal League of Croatians
Mountain Park Croatian Society
Association of United Ukrainians

Occupational

United Mine Workers of America
Mine Rescue Teams
Workmen's Compensation Board
Cadomin Local of the Alberta Teachers Association

Leisure

Fish and Game Association
Ham Radio Club
Knitting Club
Bridge Clubs (all towns)

Appendix F: List of archival taped interviews

- W. L. Hammett — Managerial position in Foothills from 1922 - 1958.
Active layman.
- Cam Matthews — Mail carrier, forest ranger, teacher, came to Mountain
Park in 1916.
- Alex Murray — Construction worker, then miner. President of local union.
Mercoal, Mountain Park, Sterco, and Robb in the 1930s.
- Vic Riando — retired accountant Mountain Park and Luscar from early
1920s
- Jack Roome — miner, Mountain Park, son of immigrant, 1922.
- Alex Valla — Mountain Park and Cadomin, came from Poland to Coal
Branch in 1913.